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The Rebirth
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S.H.I.E.L.D.

The Rebirth

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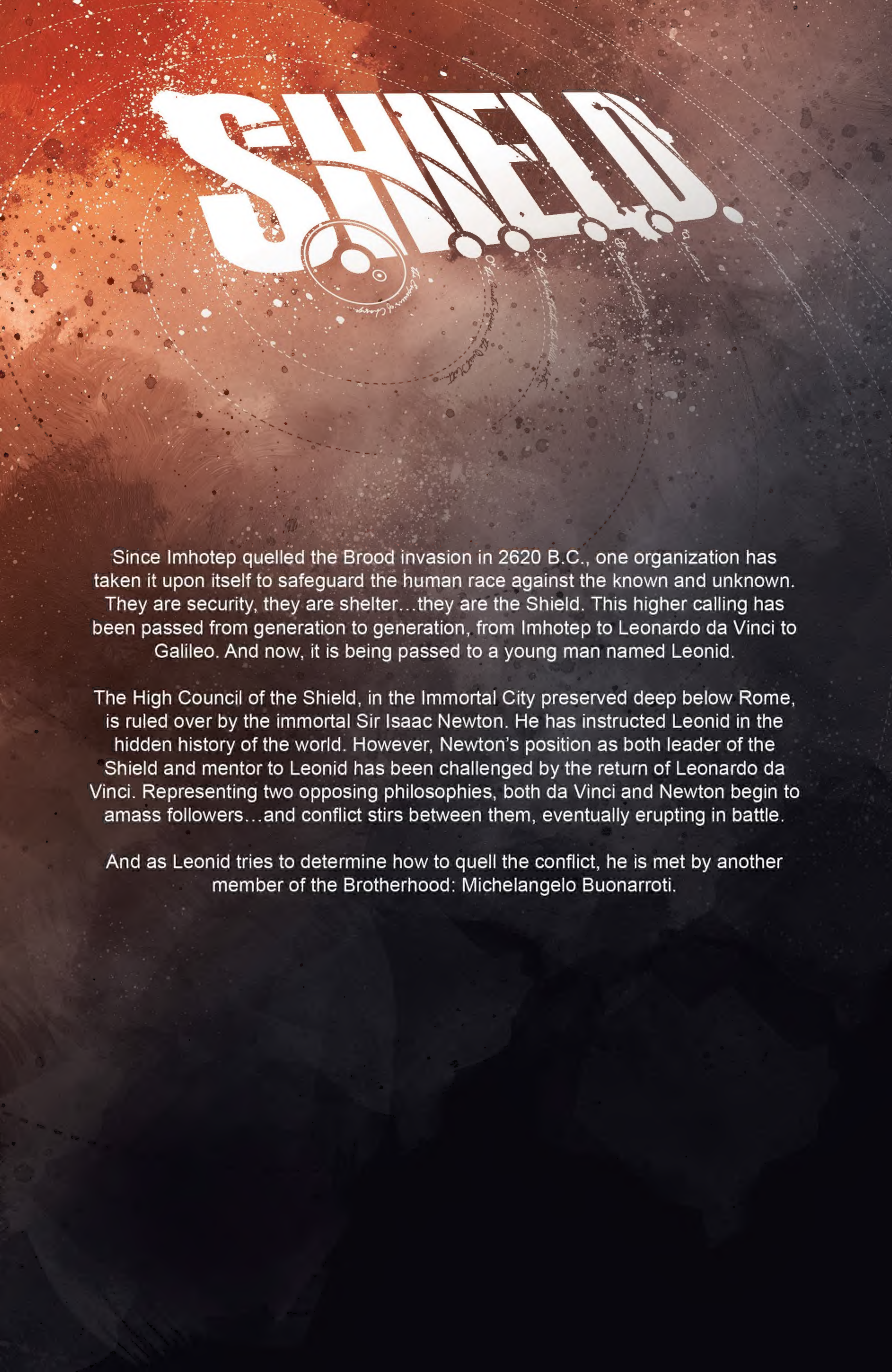
Chapter One:
"Terribilita"

TINK
TNK
TNK
TINK
I AM NOT USED TO BEGGING...
...ARE YOU TRYING TO HUMBLE ME, YOUNG MAN?
BECAUSE I FEAR YOU MAY BE HAVING SOME SUCCESS.
HOW MANY TIMES MUST I ASK YOU TO JOIN US, MICHELANGELO?
TINK
TNK

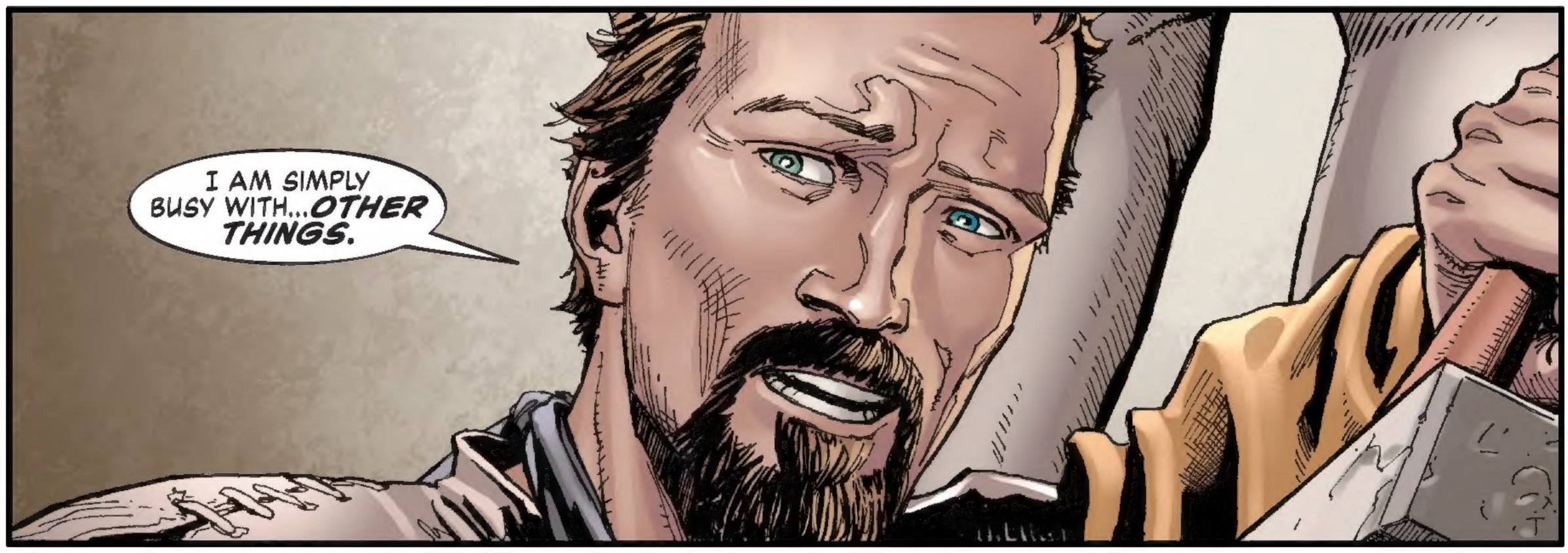
Rome.
1502.
I ASSURE YOU, MASTER DA VINCI, *INSULT* IS NOT MY INTENT...



Since Imhotep quelled the Brood invasion in 2620 B.C., one organization has taken it upon itself to safeguard the human race against the known and unknown. They are security, they are shelter…they are the Shield. This higher calling has been passed from generation to generation, from Imhotep to Leonardo da Vinci to Galileo. And now, it is being passed to a young man named Leonid.

The High Council of the Shield, in the Immortal City preserved deep below Rome, is ruled over by the immortal Sir Isaac Newton. He has instructed Leonid in the hidden history of the world. However, Newton's position as both leader of the Shield and mentor to Leonid has been challenged by the return of Leonardo da Vinci. Representing two opposing philosophies, both da Vinci and Newton begin to amass followers…and conflict stirs between them, eventually erupting in battle.

And as Leonid tries to determine how to quell the conflict, he is met by another member of the Brotherhood: Michelangelo Buonarroti.

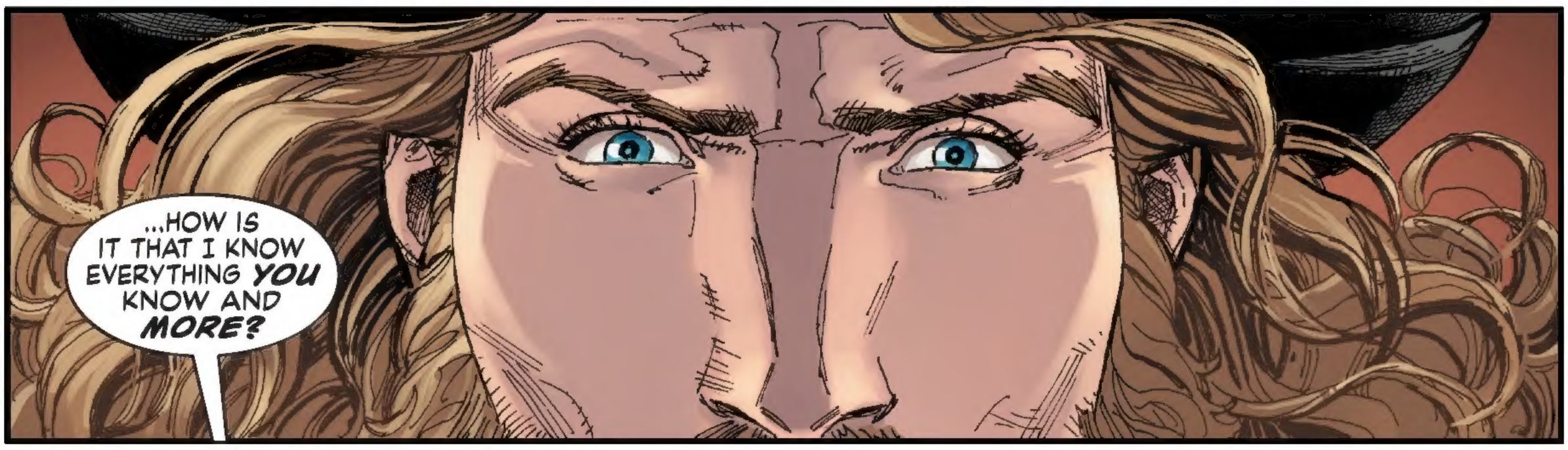

I AM SIMPLY BUSY WITH...OTHER THINGS.

OUR BROTHERHOOD IS TASKED WITH PROTECTING MANKIND. THIS REQUIRES MEN WITH VISION...MEN LIKE YOURSELF.

THERE ARE THINGS... GOING ON, THINGS HAVE HAPPENED THAT DEFY WONDER.

EXACTLY WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT, MASTER DA VINCI?

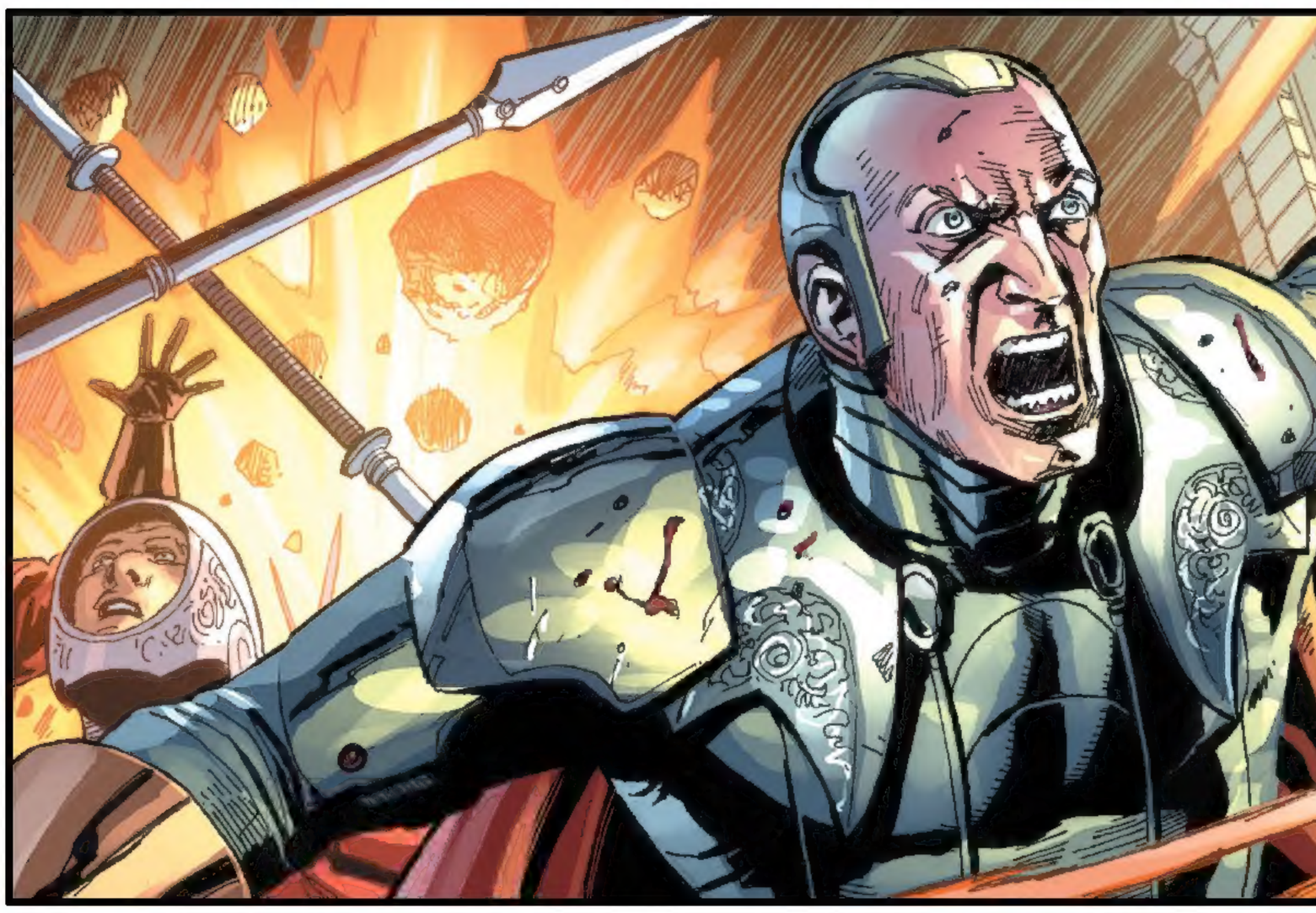
A HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE WORLD, MICHELANGELO.
AH, SECRETS AND MYSTERIES...
LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING.
IF ALL THIS KNOWLEDGE YOU POSSESS HAS BEEN KEPT SECRET...


...HOW IS IT THAT I KNOW EVERYTHING YOU KNOW AND MORE?

HOLD! HOLD!
HERE THEY COME AGAIN!
The Immortal City. 1960.
The battle for the Brotherhood of the Shield is underway.

YOU SAID THIS WAS NECESSARY... BUT, MY GOD...
...I CANNOT JUST WATCH THIS AND DO NOTHING.

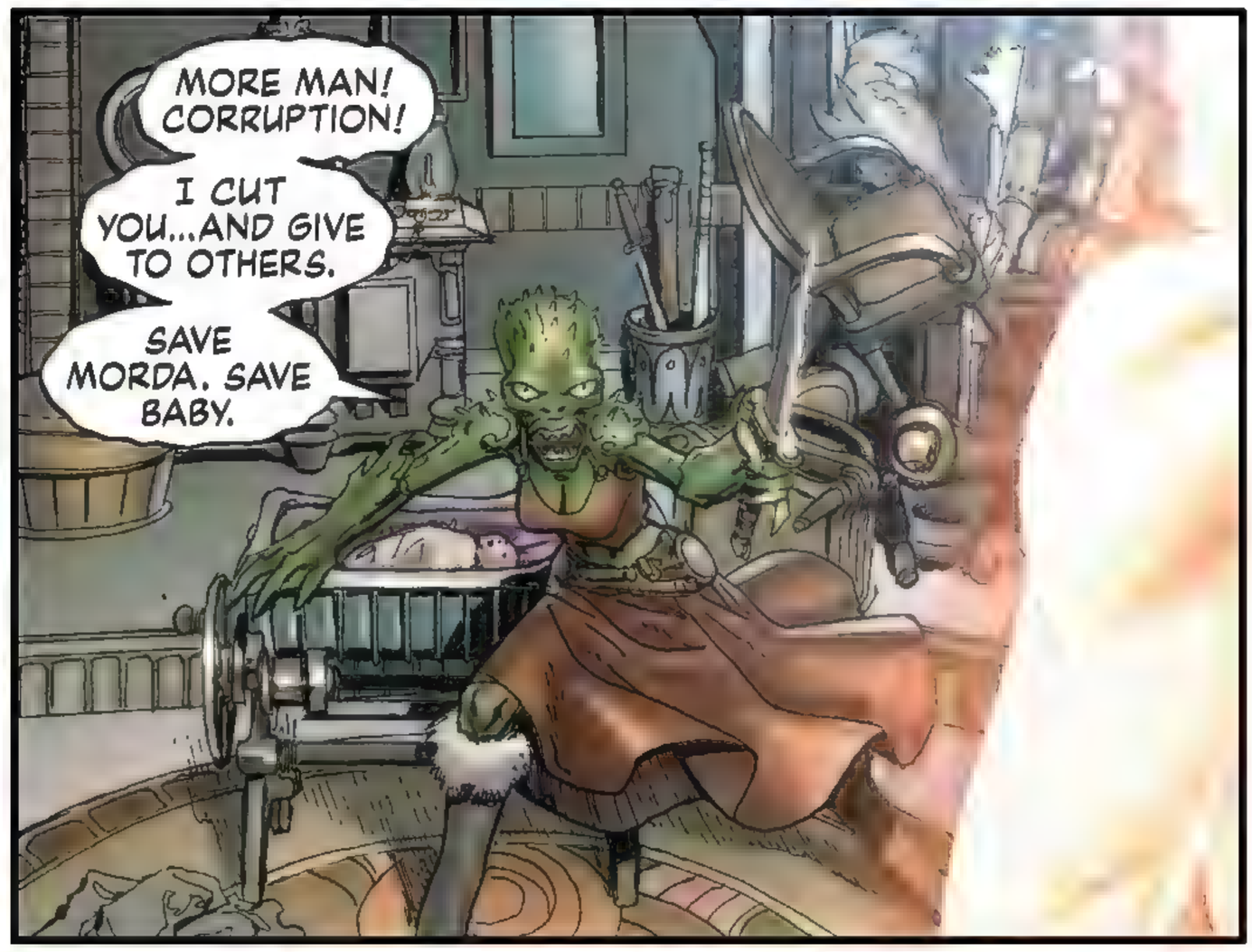
I HAVE TO TRY AND STOP THIS...
I HAVE TO TRY AGAIN.

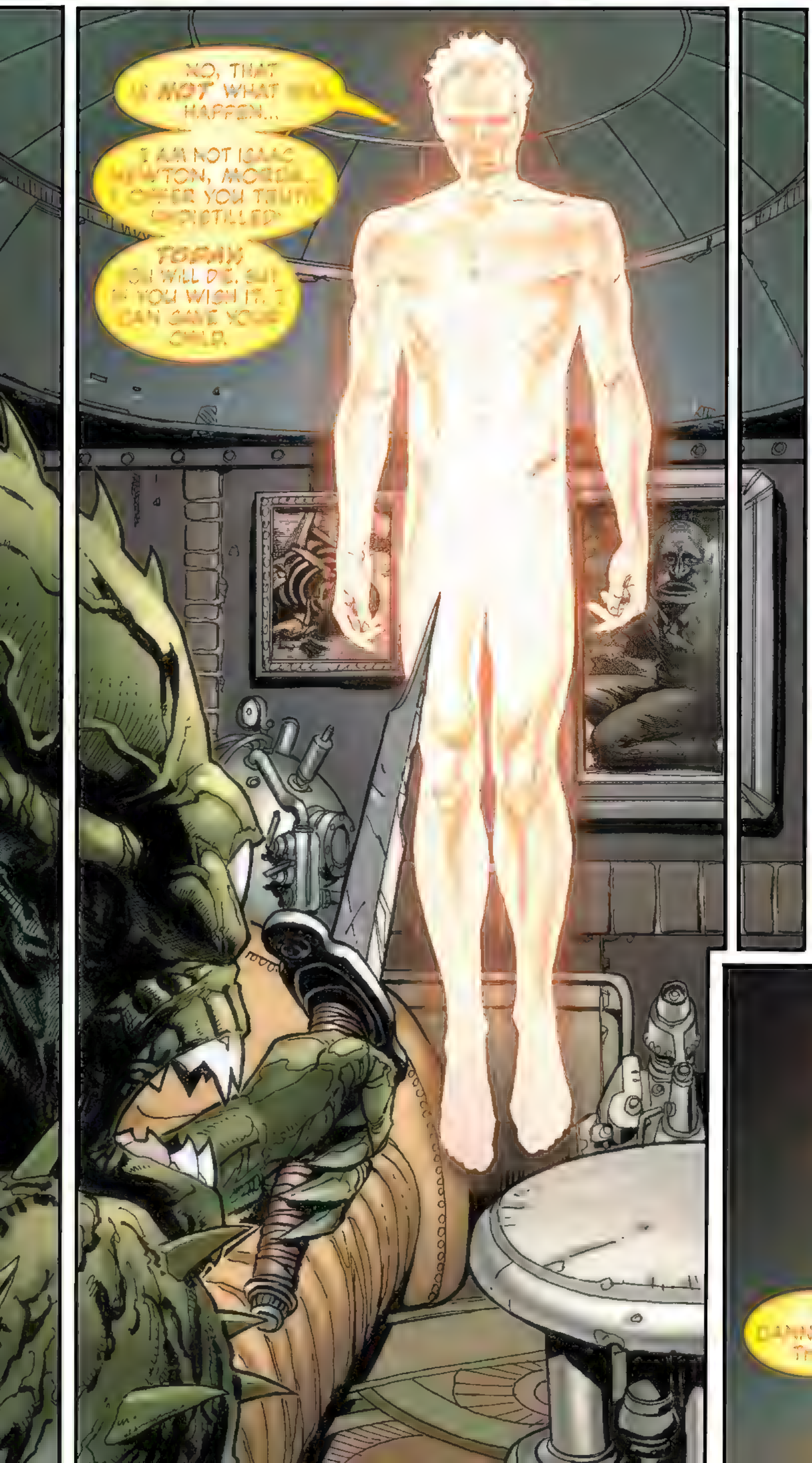


NO, LEONID.
PATIENCE. YOU MUST WAIT...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? MEN ARE DYING... RIGHT THERE... NOW!
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING AND QUICKLY--WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
TIME?
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT... TIME?

The Deviant Capitol.
Ashomia. 1630.
COME OUT NOW, MORDA!
CORRUPTION! CORRUPTION!
HE HAS STOLEN OUR KNOWLEDGE... AND LEFT YOU TO ANSWER FOR IT!
OH, OHHH...
WE HAVE MADE A MISTAKE.
BIG MISTAKE IN BONDING.
NEWTON STEAL. NEWTON LIE!

BAH!


MORE MAN! CORRUPTION!
I CUT YOU...AND GIVE TO OTHERS.
SAVE MORDA. SAVE BABY.

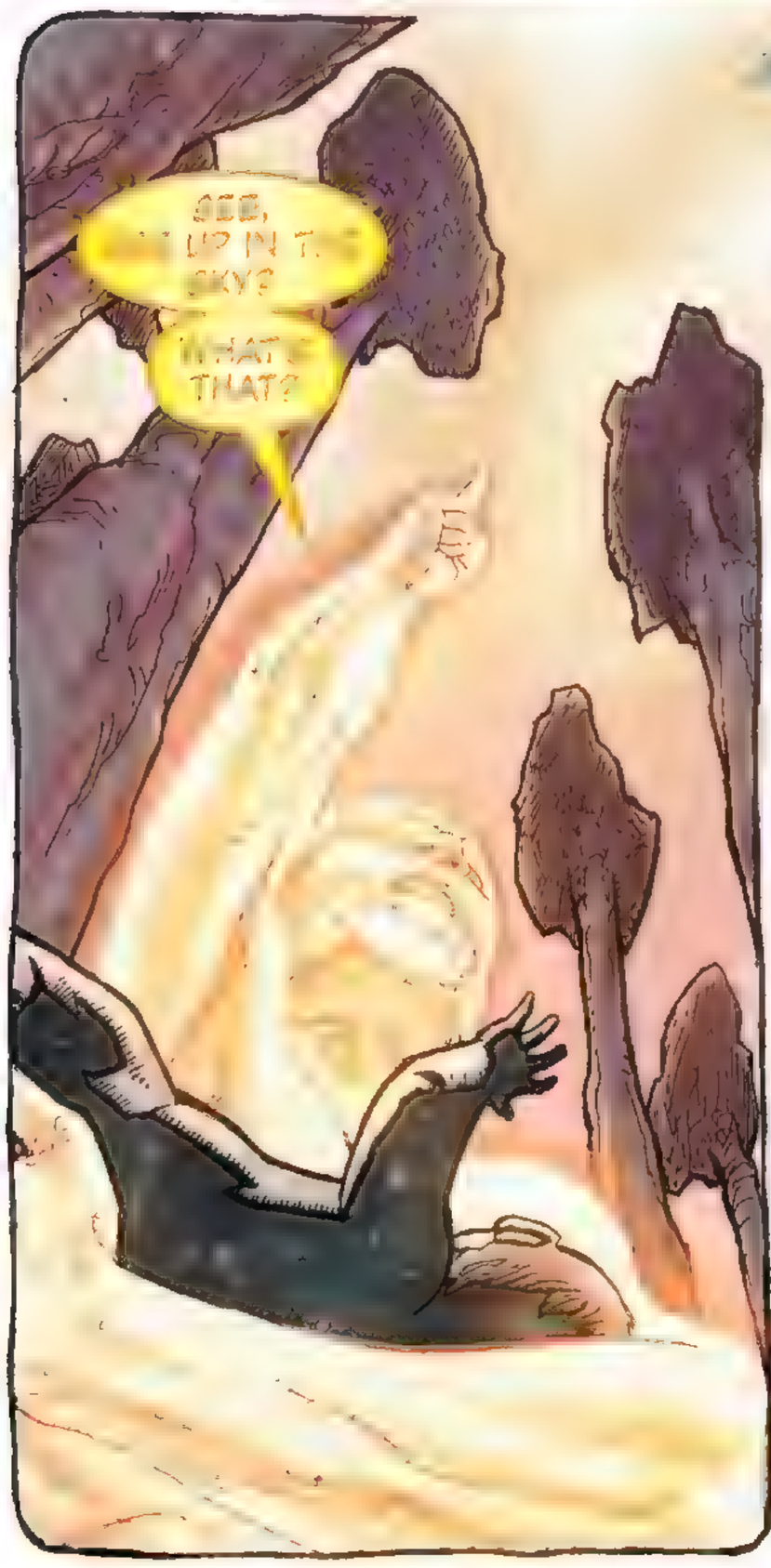

NO, THAT IS NOT WHAT WILL HAPPEN...
I AM NOT ISAAC NEWTON, MORDA. I OFFER YOU TRUTH, UNFETTERED.
TOFAN
I WILL DIE. BUT IF YOU WISH IT, I CAN GIVE YOUR CHILD.

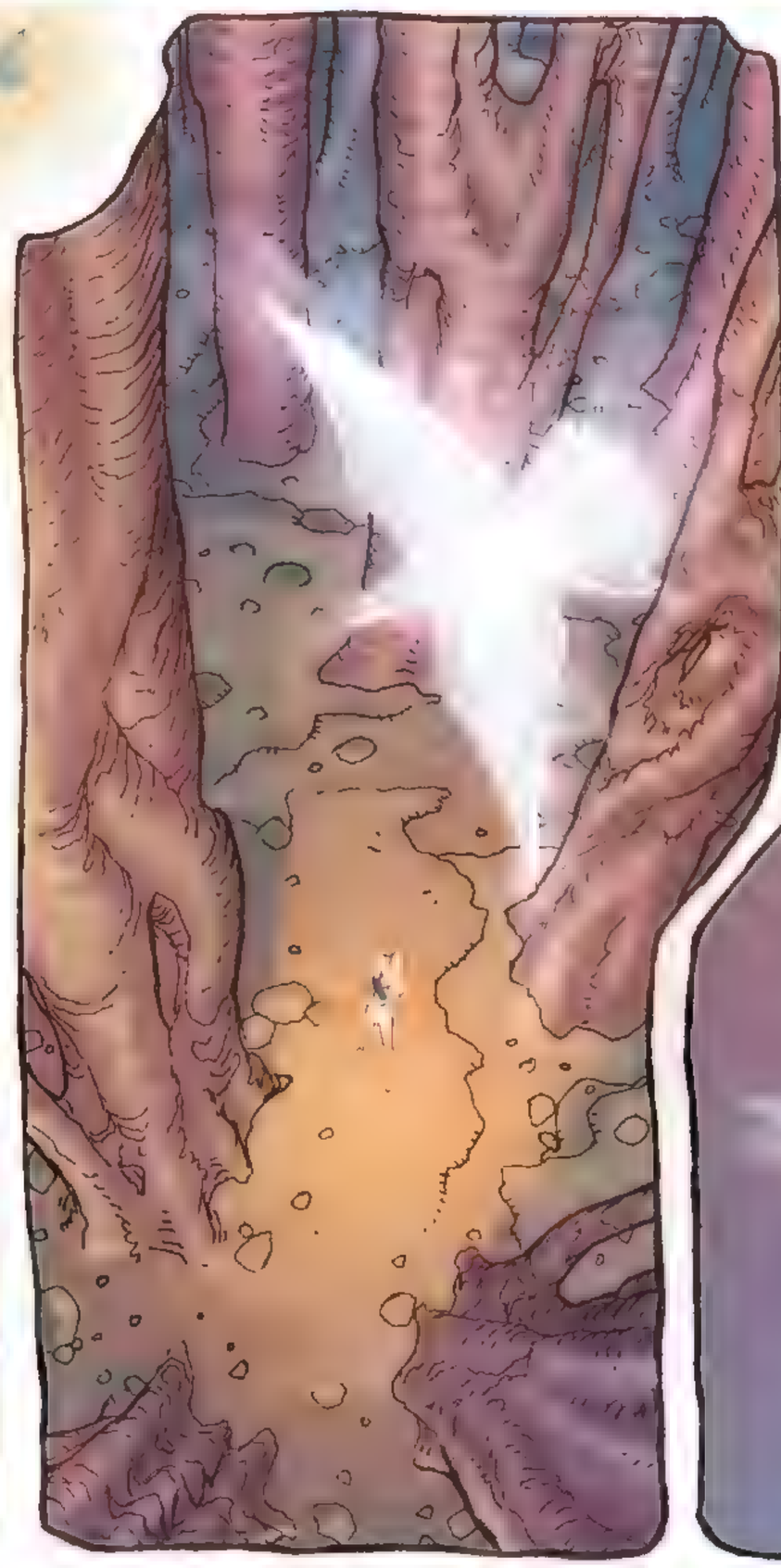
SAVE BABY?
TAKE BABY?
PROMISE. NO NEWTON!

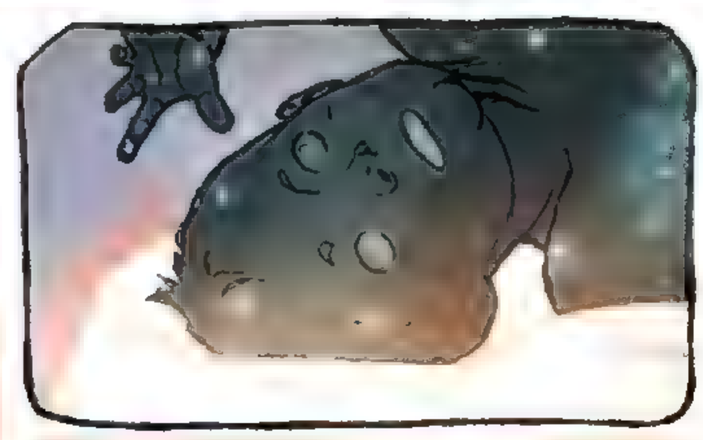
I CANNOT DO THAT.

PROMISE!
NO NEWTON!
I'M SORRY. I CAN ONLY PROMISE THAT HE WILL LIVE. NOTHING ELSE.
TAKE BABY.
BABY LIVE.
CRASH

The Sinkhole.
Bendy Time.



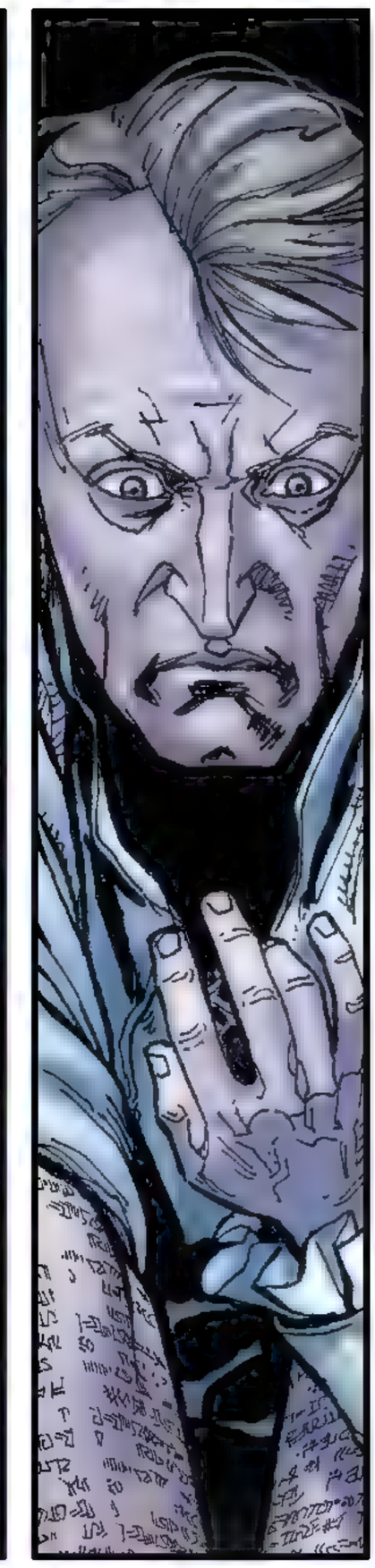


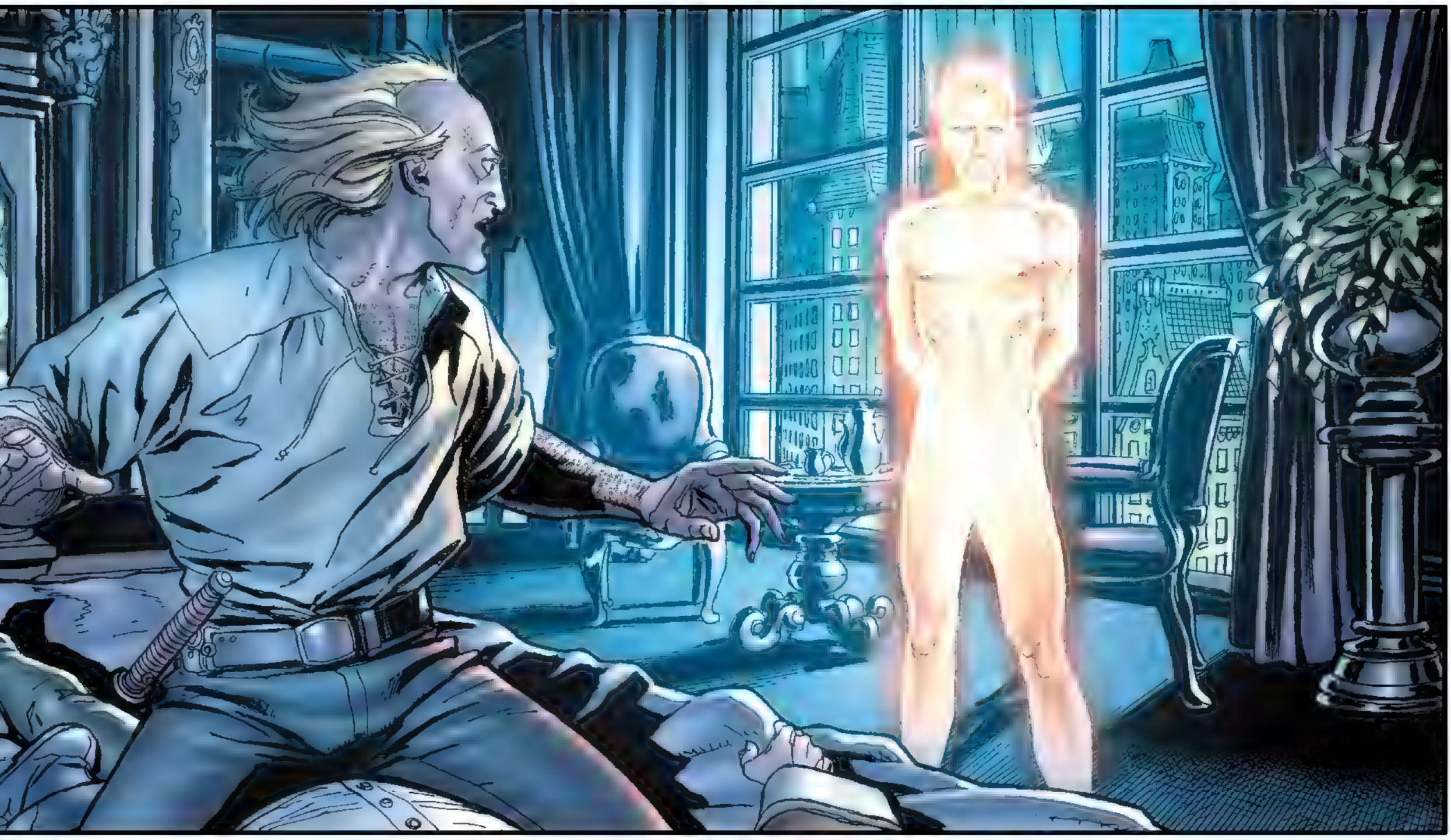


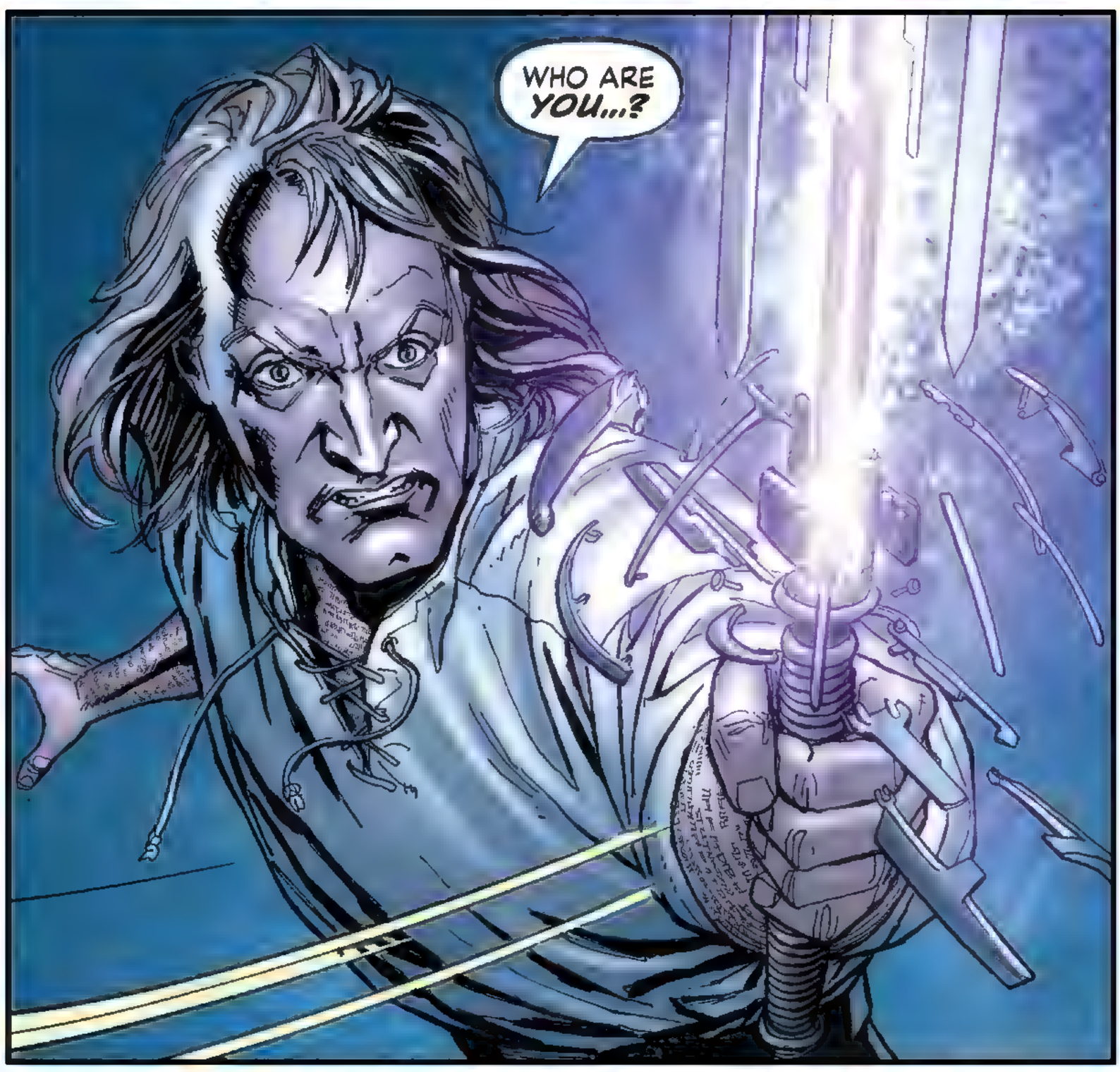
Skwak?
OHHHHH.
IT SEEMS YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN, LITTLE ONE. YOU MUST CARE FOR HIM AND GUIDE HIM, AS YOUR OWN.
HERE, TIME WILL SEEM TO FLOW VERY STRANGELY...YOU BOTH MUST STAY UNTIL THE MAN WHO HURT YOU FINDS THIS PLACE.
YOU WILL LOVE HIM.
AND HE WILL LOVE YOU BOTH.
I HAVE BEEN CHO-SEN.
YES.
AND YOU WILL NEED TO GIVE HIM THIS.

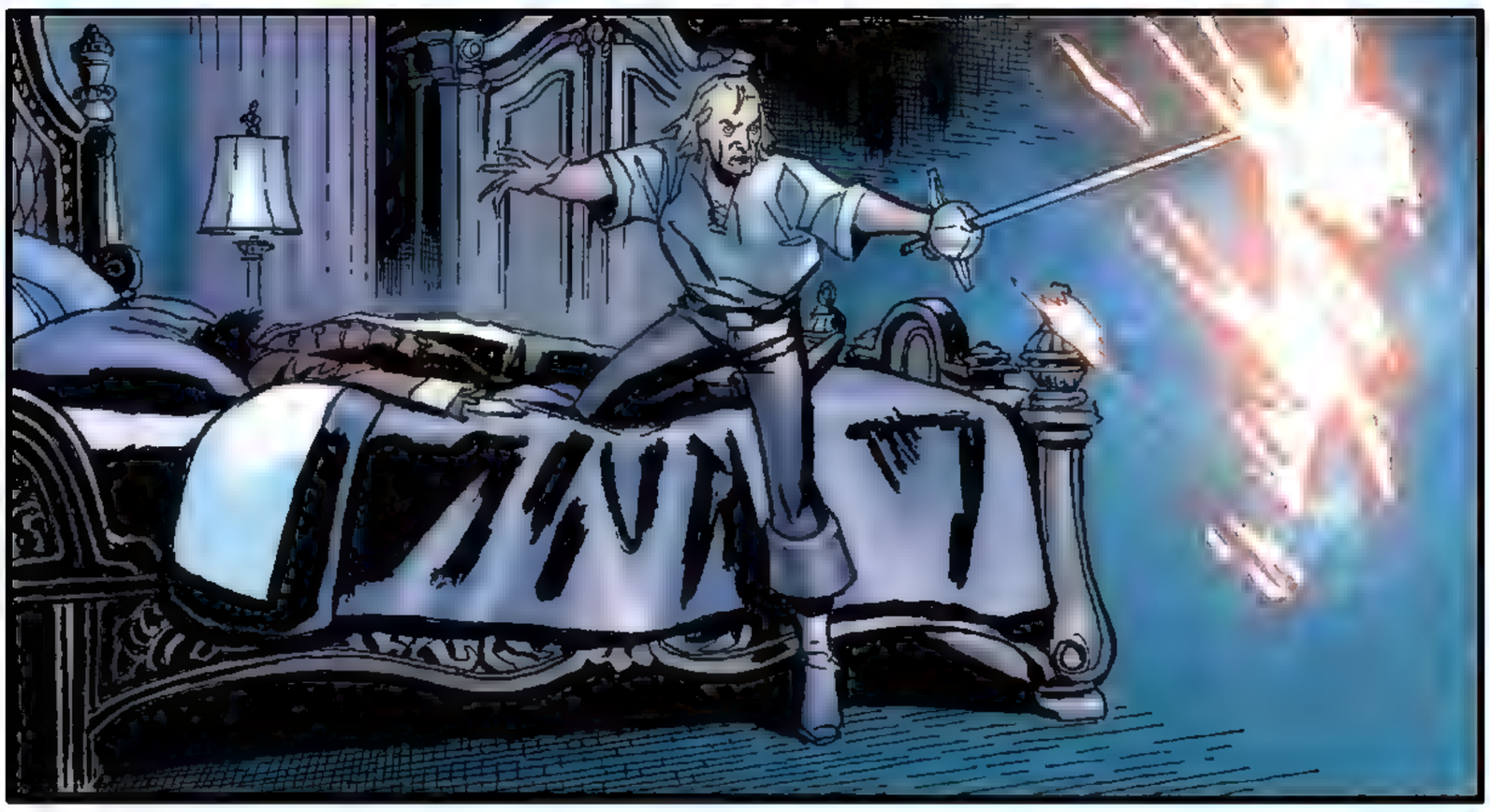
Rome. 1642.

Galileo Galilei, the head of the Brotherhood.






WHO ARE YOU...?



Rome.
1502.

YOU CANNOT *POSSIBLY* KNOW THE THINGS I KNOW.

OH, REALLY?

TELL ME, MASTER DA VINCI...HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF DÉJÀ VU?

NO.

OF COURSE YOU HAVEN'T. YOU DON'T SPEAK FRENCH AND ÉMILE BOIRAC HASN'T EVEN BEEN BORN AND EVEN IF HE HAD YOU *STILL* WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND QUANTUM MECHANICS...

WHAT ARE YOU...?

HERE, A SMALL PIECE OF THE DIVINE.

ALL NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE.

WHAT?

SO... WHERE WERE WE?

DÉJÀ VU.

IN WHAT YOU CALL THE FUTURE, MOST SCIENTISTS THEORIZE THAT THIS PHENOMENON IS CAUSED BY WHAT WE CALL ANOMALIES--A TYPE OF DISEASE WHICH BETTERS SHORT AND LONG-TERM MEMORY.

THIS IS *INCORRECT*. DÉJÀ VU IS ACTUALLY A QUANTUM RESONANCE ACROSS PARALLEL UNIVERSES, MOMENTS WHERE, IN ACTUALITY, YOU EXIST IN THE EXACT SAME SPOT, DOING THE EXACT SAME THING IN ANOTHER REALITY.

DID YOU KNOW THAT DÉJÀ VU IS MUCH MORE COMMON AT A YOUNGER AGE THAN OLDER? IT MAKES PERFECT *SENSE*, REALLY. QUANTUM DIVERGENCE INCREASES WITH ALL MORE CHOICES, MORE ANCHORS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

OF COURSE YOU DO.

I AM HERE NOW.
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE.
I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE.

I... I...THIS IS...
WHAT NOW?
I KNEW YOU WERE COMING TO ASK THAT.
NOW YOU MUST SAVE THE WORLD.
YOU HAVE DESIGNED A GREAT CITY. IT MUST BE BUILT.
IN THE CITY THERE MUST BE A DOOR THAT LEADS TO A SEEING PLACE.
THE KEY TO THAT DOOR LOOKS LIKE THIS. MAKE ONLY ONE.
YOU MUST SAVE THE DYNAMO. IT WILL BE AT THE SEEING PLACE.
THERE IS A GOD GROWING IN THE DARK.
THIS... IS THE HUMAN MACHINE.

France.
1645.
I HAVE ALREADY DECIDED THAT I WOULD DO WHAT YOU HAVE ASKED OF ME: IMPRISONMENT FOR A MUCH GREATER CAUSE.
WHY DO YOU LINGER?
BECAUSE THERE IS ONE THING I HAVE YET TO TELL YOU... THE TRUTH ABOUT THE WAY THINGS REALLY ARE.
A PART OF YOU WILL REMAIN CHANGED FOREVER. IN SOME WAYS, YOU WILL NEVER ESCAPE.
...WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
BECAUSE, IN THE VERY SAME WAY YOU WILL ALWAYS BE... FREE.

WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?
The Immortal City. 1960.

THE BATTLE BEING FOUGHT IN BETWEEN MEN WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN CHOOSE THEIR FATE AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEY CANNOT.
FREE WILL IN OPPOSITION TO FATE.
YES.

THE TIME YOU LEARNED LIFE AND JUDGEMENT ON ARE BOTH WRONG.
THE TIME YOU LEARN ARE BOTH WRONG.

YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A THIRD WAY. I'VE FOUND...

...THIS IS IT.

"TIME IS NOT LINEAR."

LOOK!
IT IS WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR...
IT IS WHAT HAS ALWAYS COME COMING...
DAD!

IT IS
NOVE.

Chapter Two:
"Fire"

Florence.
1503.

BE PERFECTLY STILL, MASTER. WHAT MATTERS NOW IS A STABLE CONNECTION.

LORENZO?

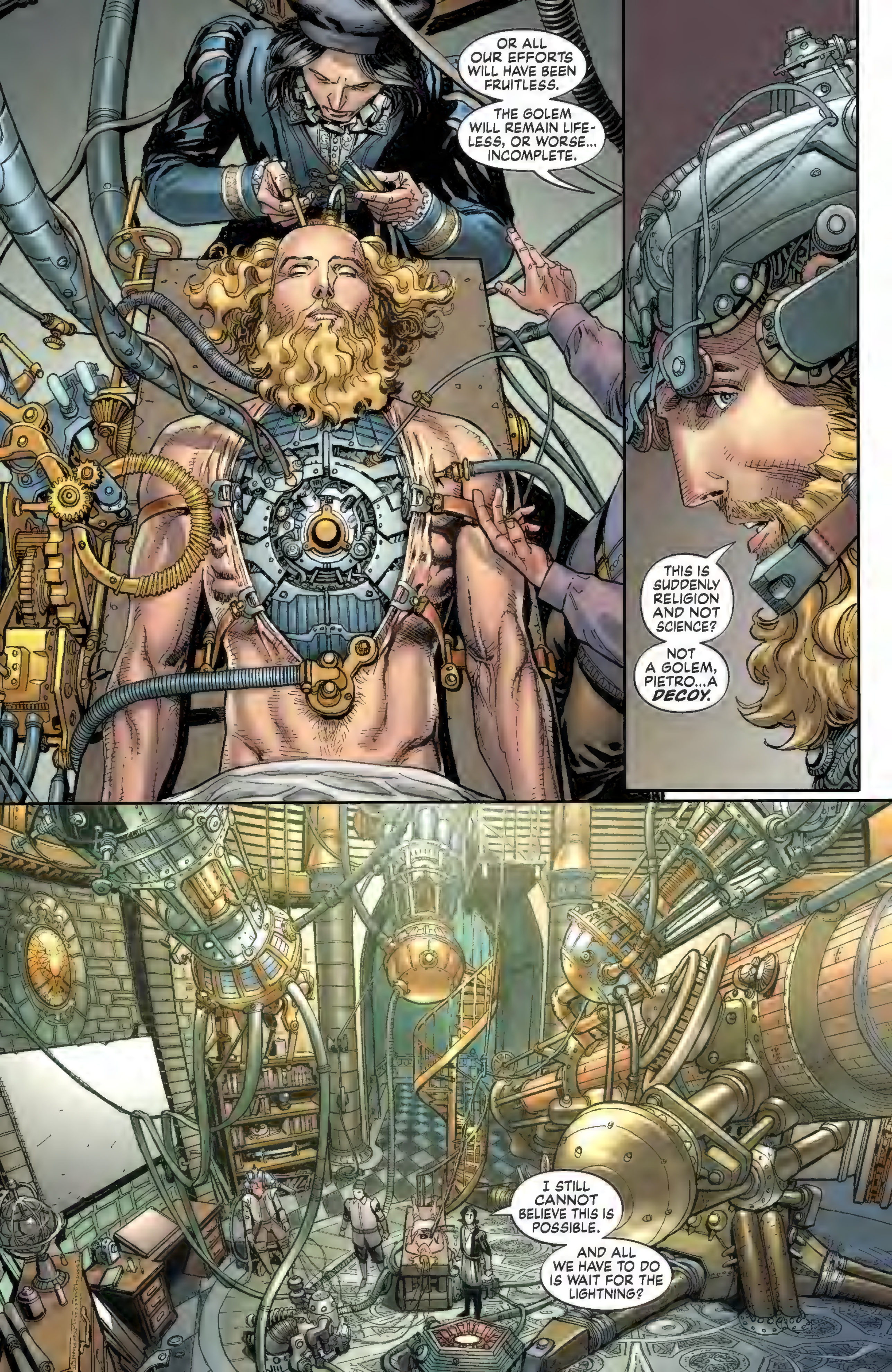
I DON'T THINK THE NOSE IS RIGHT.

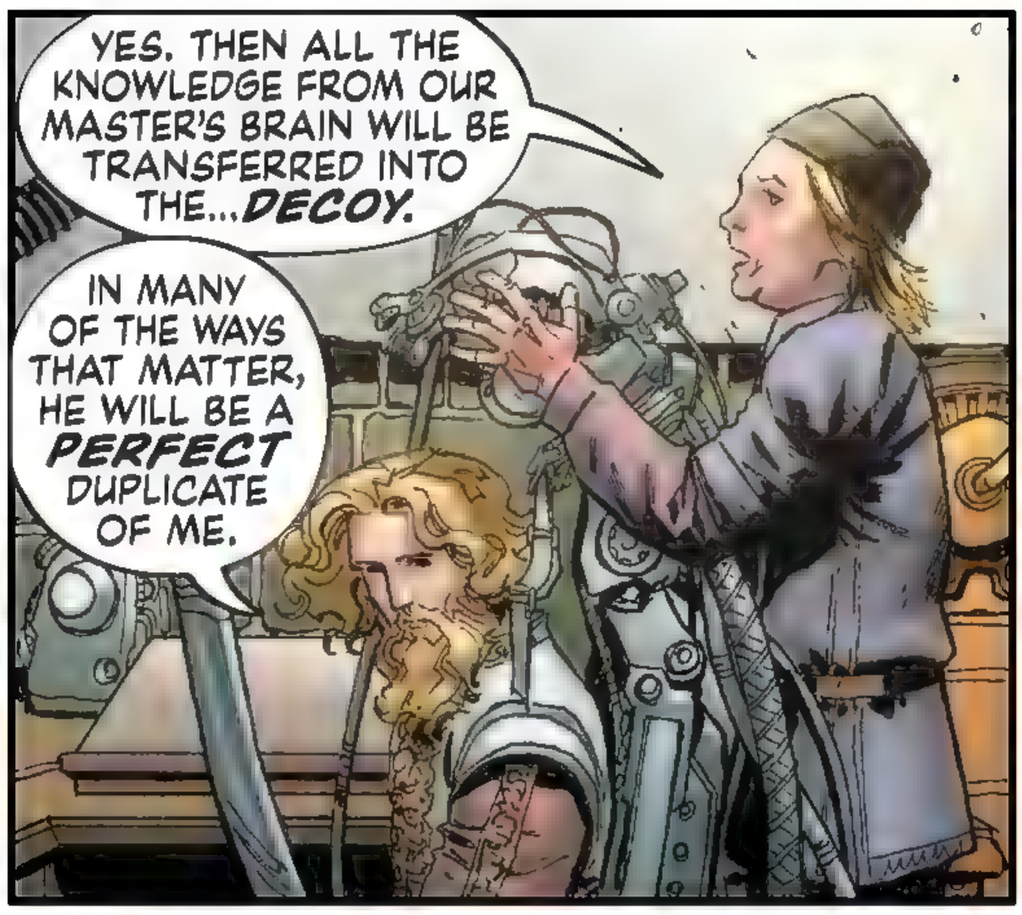
LORENZO!

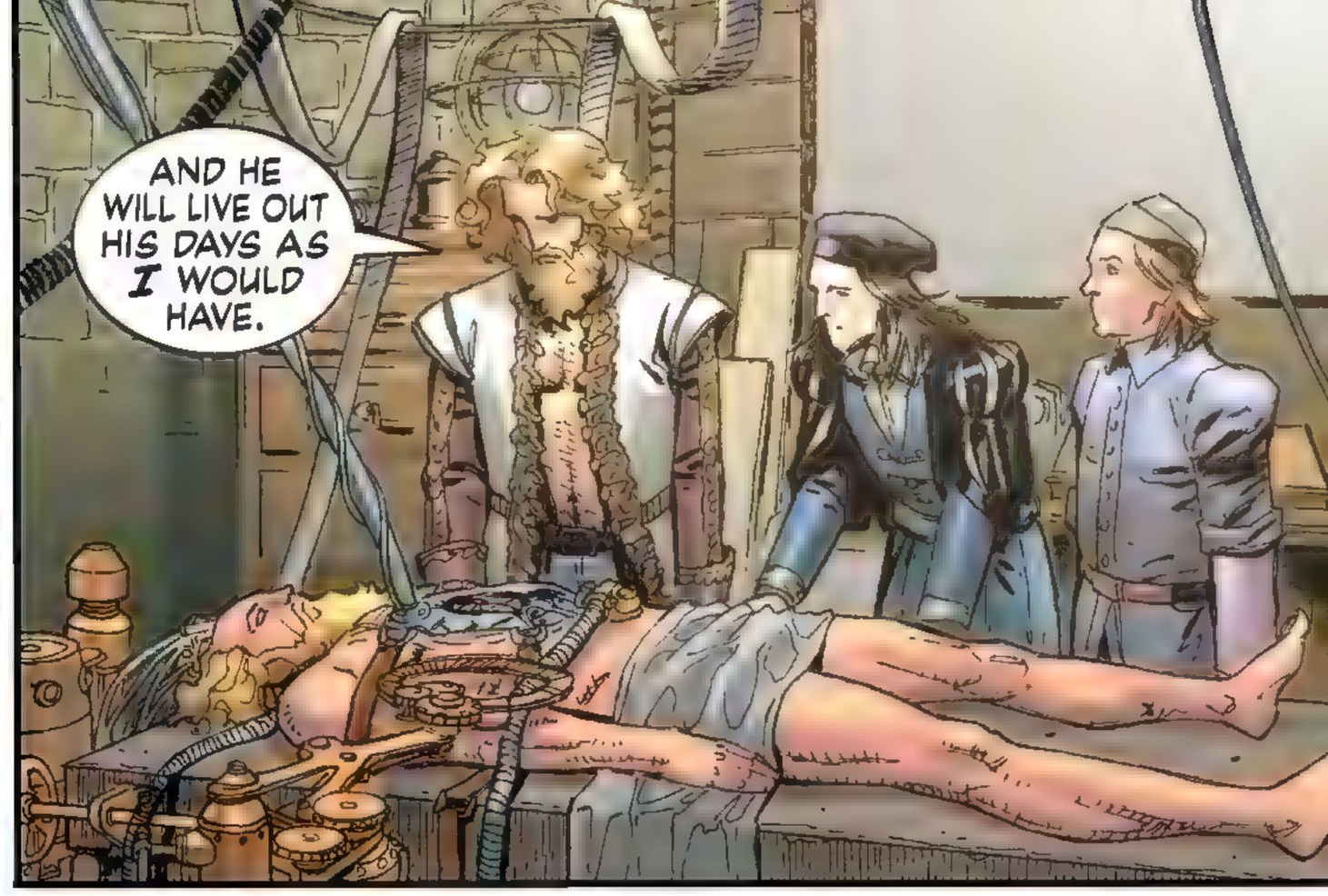
EH?

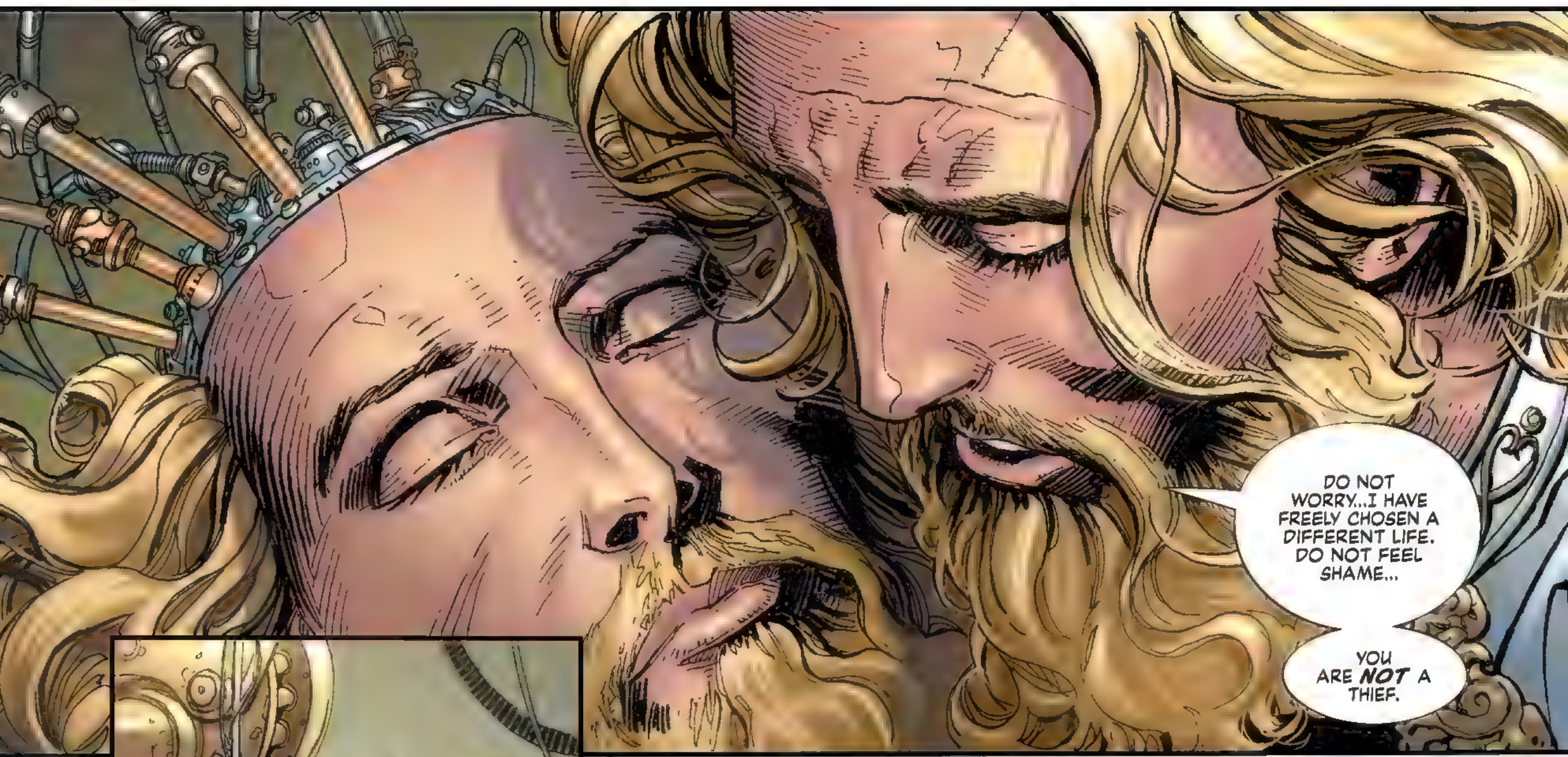
THE CONNECTION.

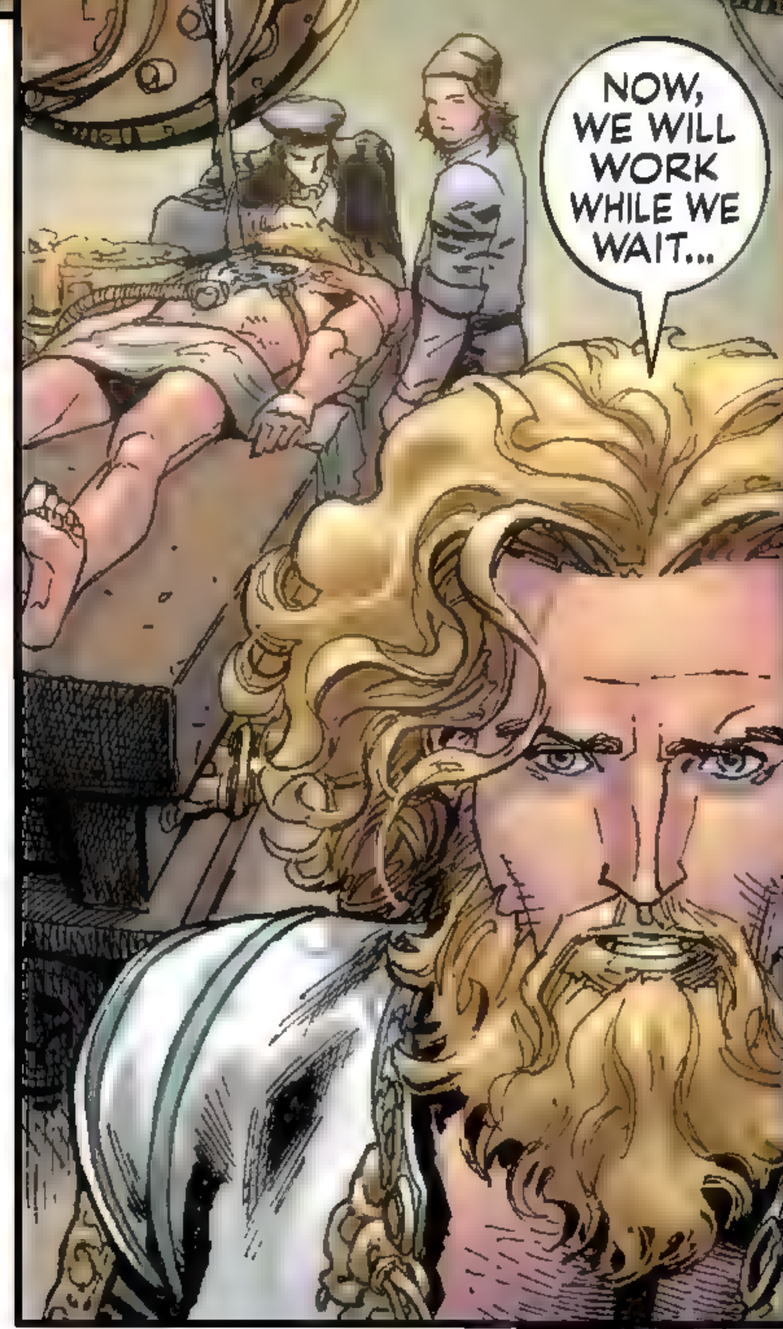
AND MAKE SURE IT'S PROPERLY FIXED...

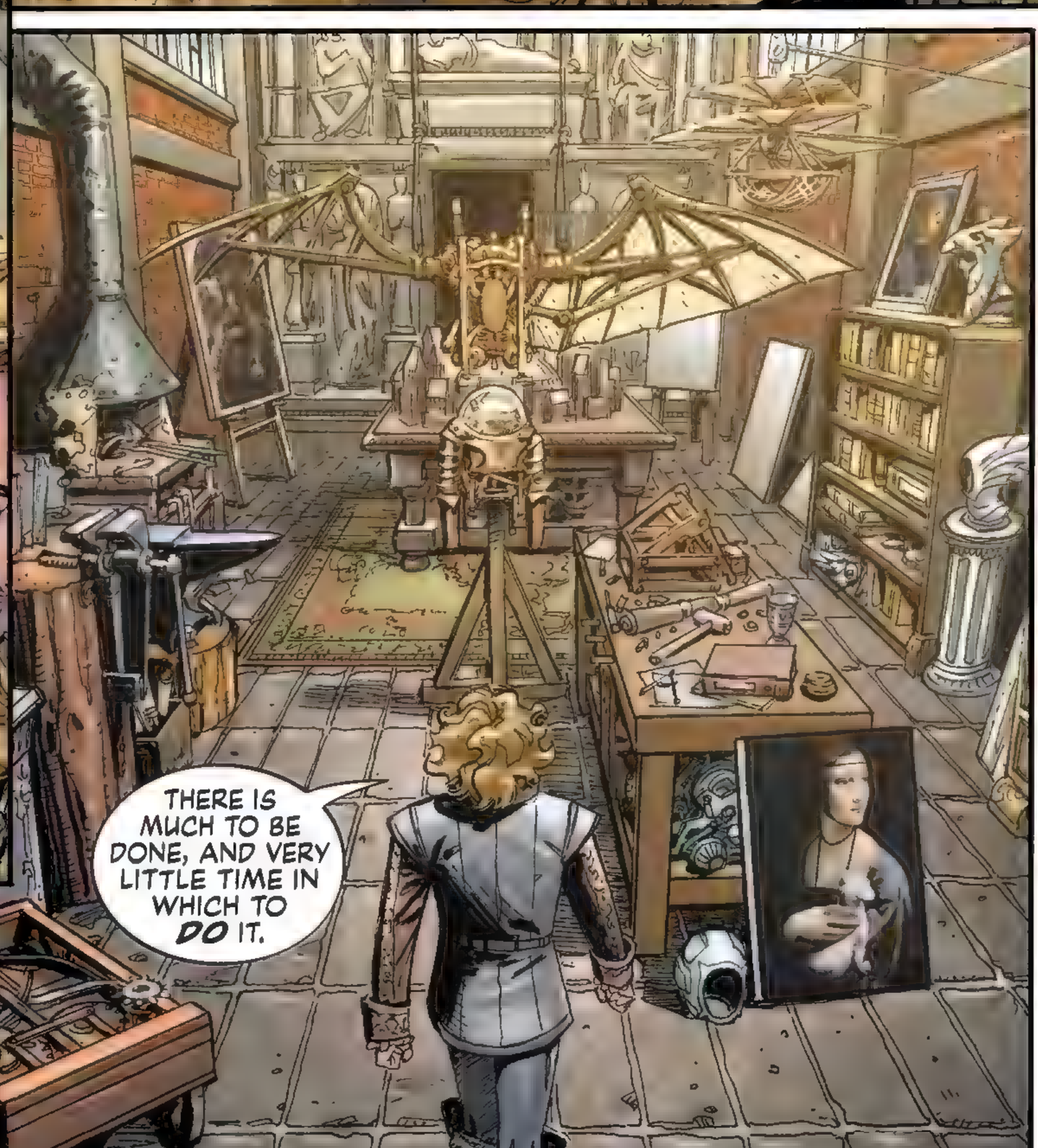

OR ALL OUR EFFORTS WILL HAVE BEEN FRUITLESS.
THE GOLEM WILL REMAIN LIFE-LESS, OR WORSE... INCOMPLETE.
THIS IS SUDDENLY RELIGION AND NOT SCIENCE?
NOT A GOLEM, PIETRO...A DECOY.
I STILL CANNOT BELIEVE THIS IS POSSIBLE.
AND ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT FOR THE LIGHTNING?


YES. THEN ALL THE KNOWLEDGE FROM OUR MASTER'S BRAIN WILL BE TRANSFERRED INTO THE...DECOY.
IN MANY OF THE WAYS THAT MATTER, HE WILL BE A PERFECT DUPLICATE OF ME.

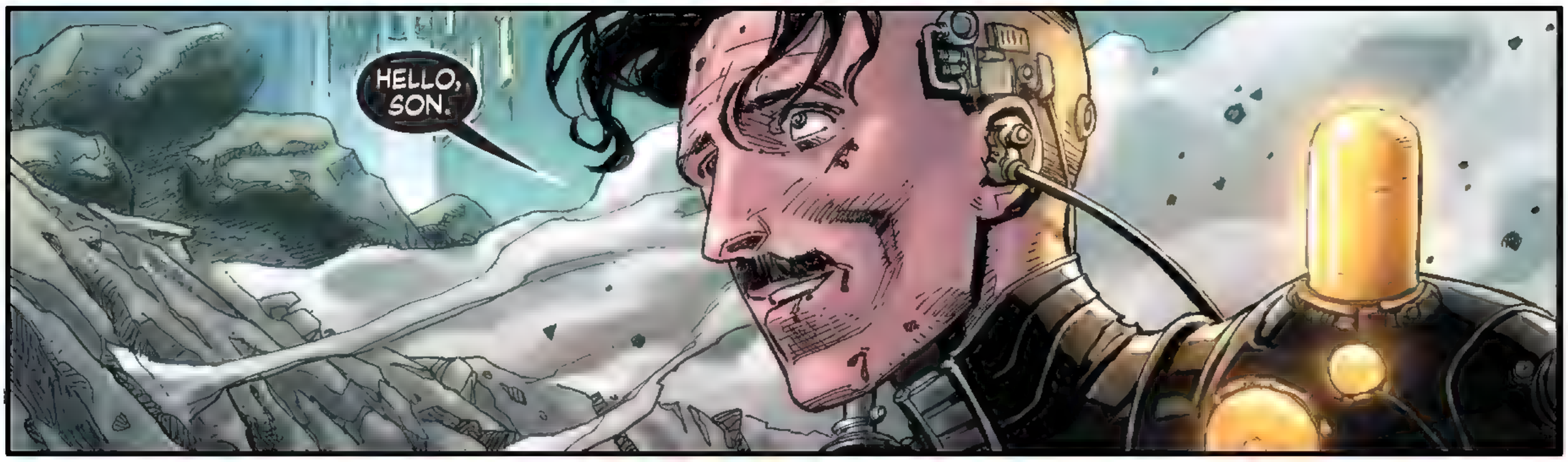

AND HE WILL LIVE OUT HIS DAYS AS I WOULD HAVE.


DO NOT WORRY...I HAVE FREELY CHOSEN A DIFFERENT LIFE. DO NOT FEEL SHAME...
YOU ARE NOT A THIEF.


NOW, WE WILL WORK WHILE WE WAIT...

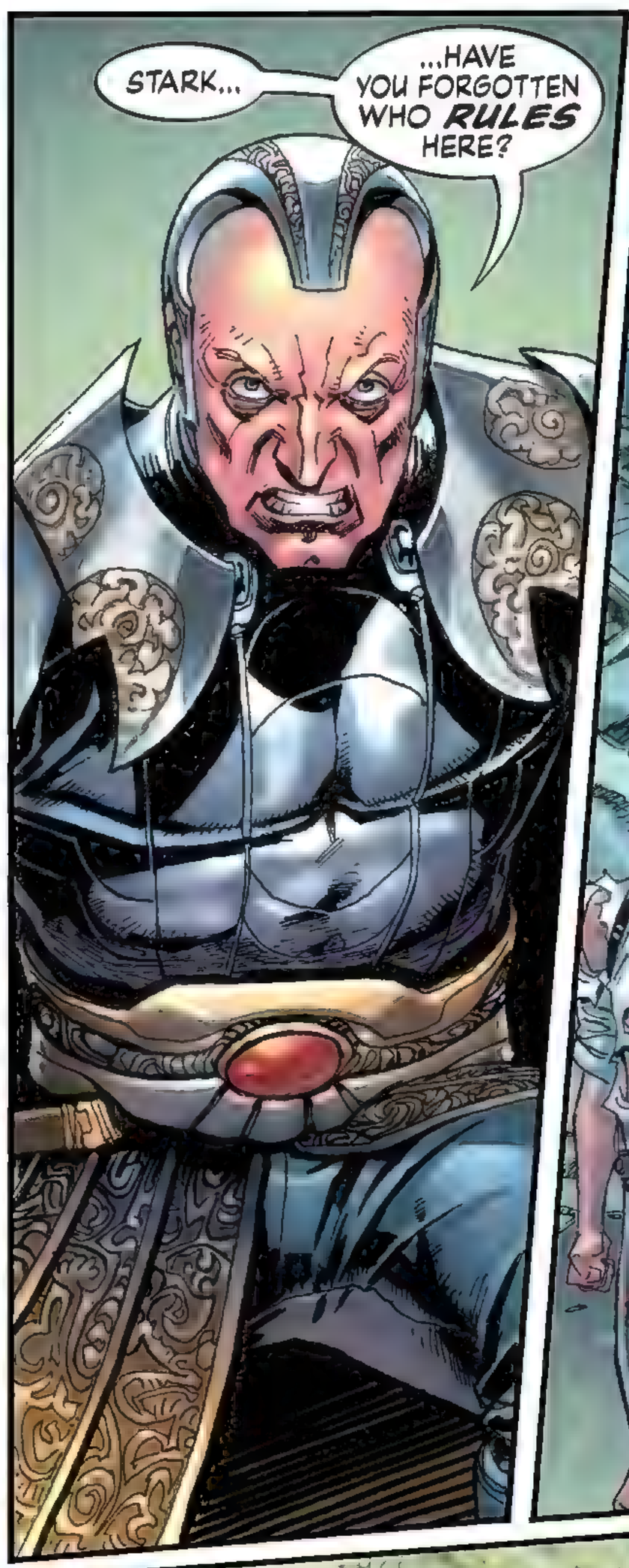

THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE, AND VERY LITTLE TIME IN WHICH TO DO IT.

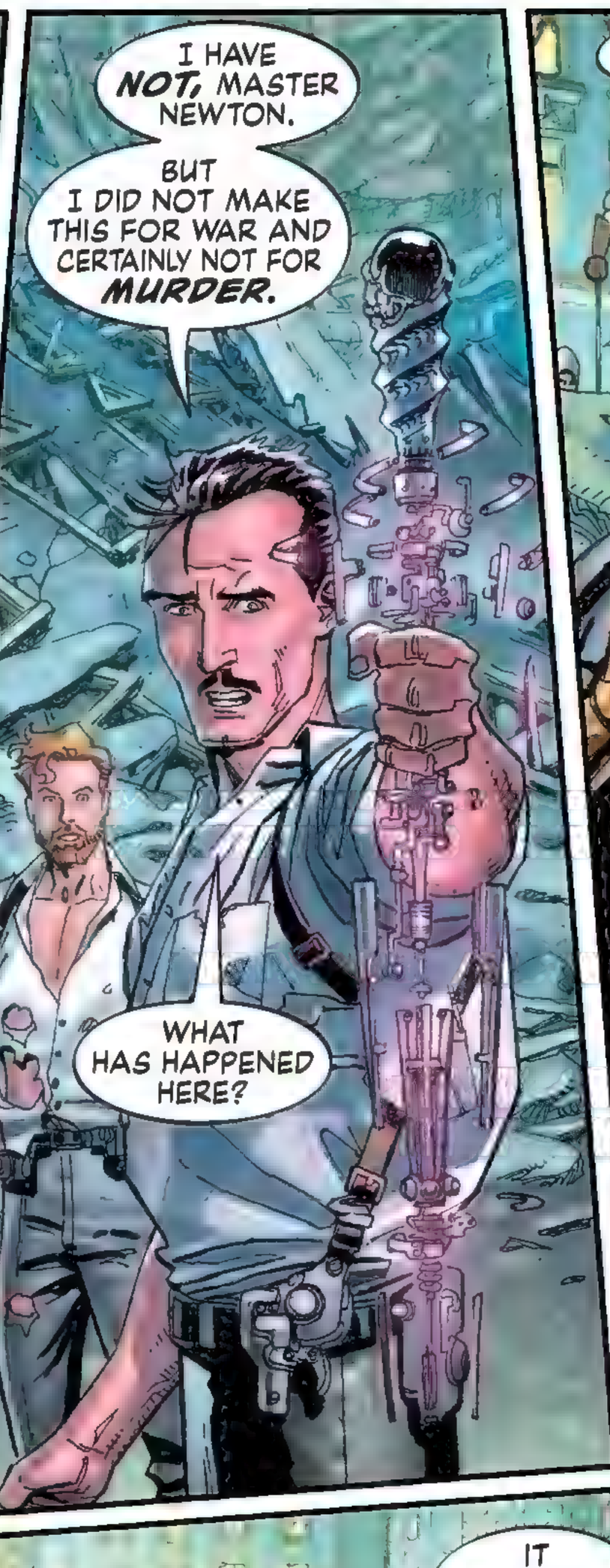
The Immortal City.
DAD!

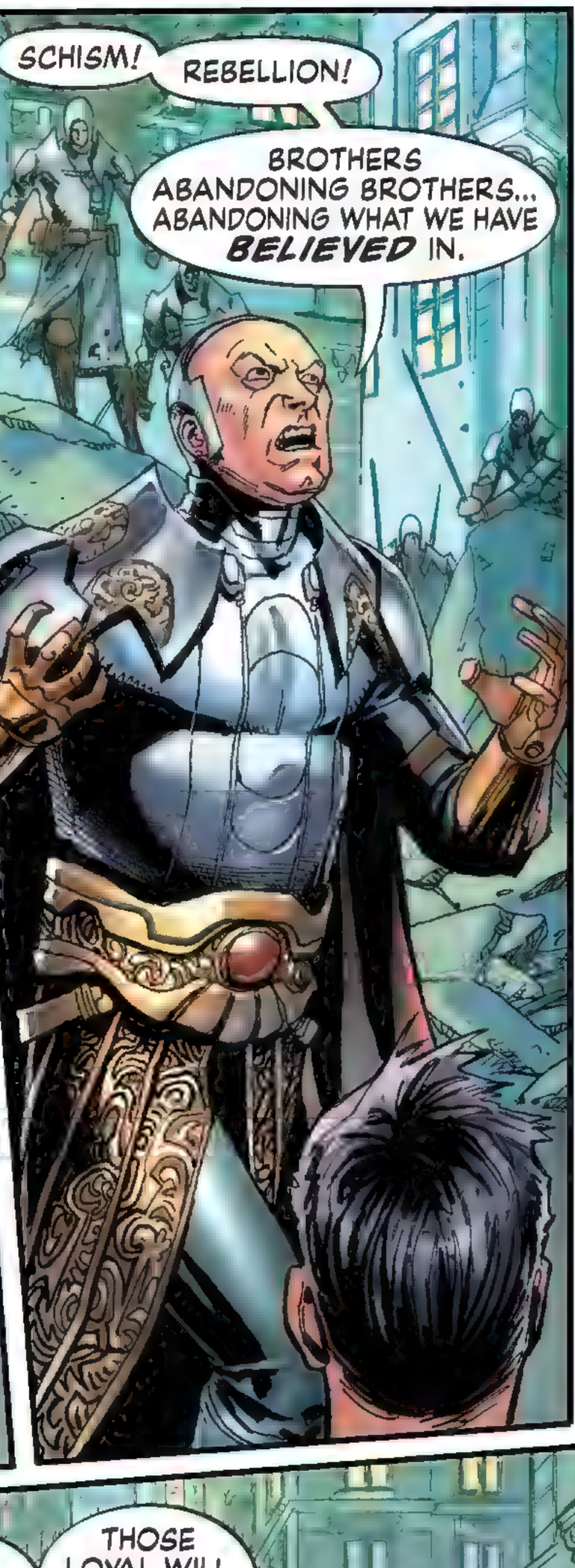

HELLO, SON.

WHAT THE HELL...?
...LOOKS LIKE A WAR ZONE.
WAR INDEED.

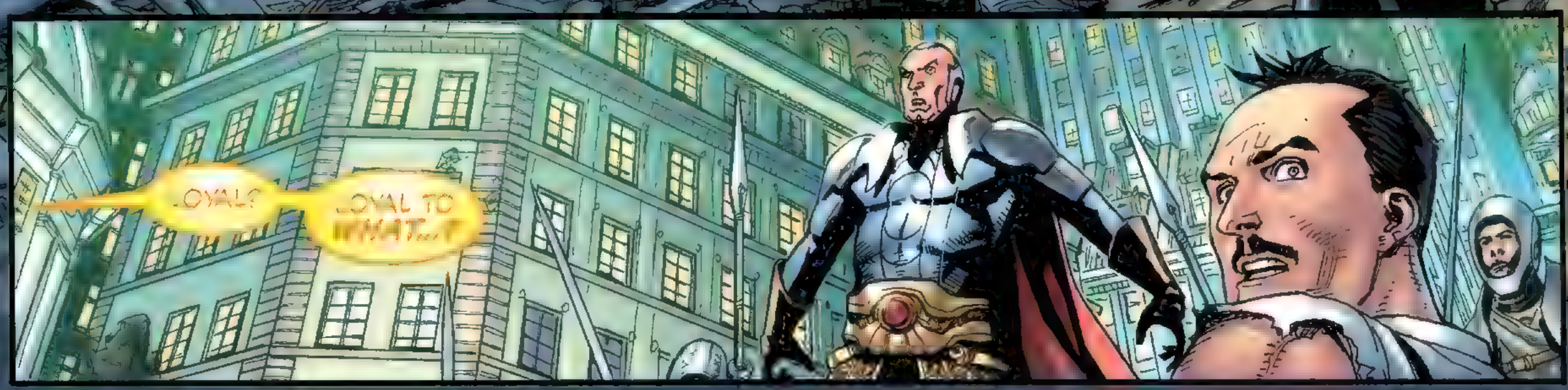
AND FOR A MOMENT... I SAW MY END.
AND YOU STILL SHALL!
EH?
RRAARRR!!
:OOOFFFF!:

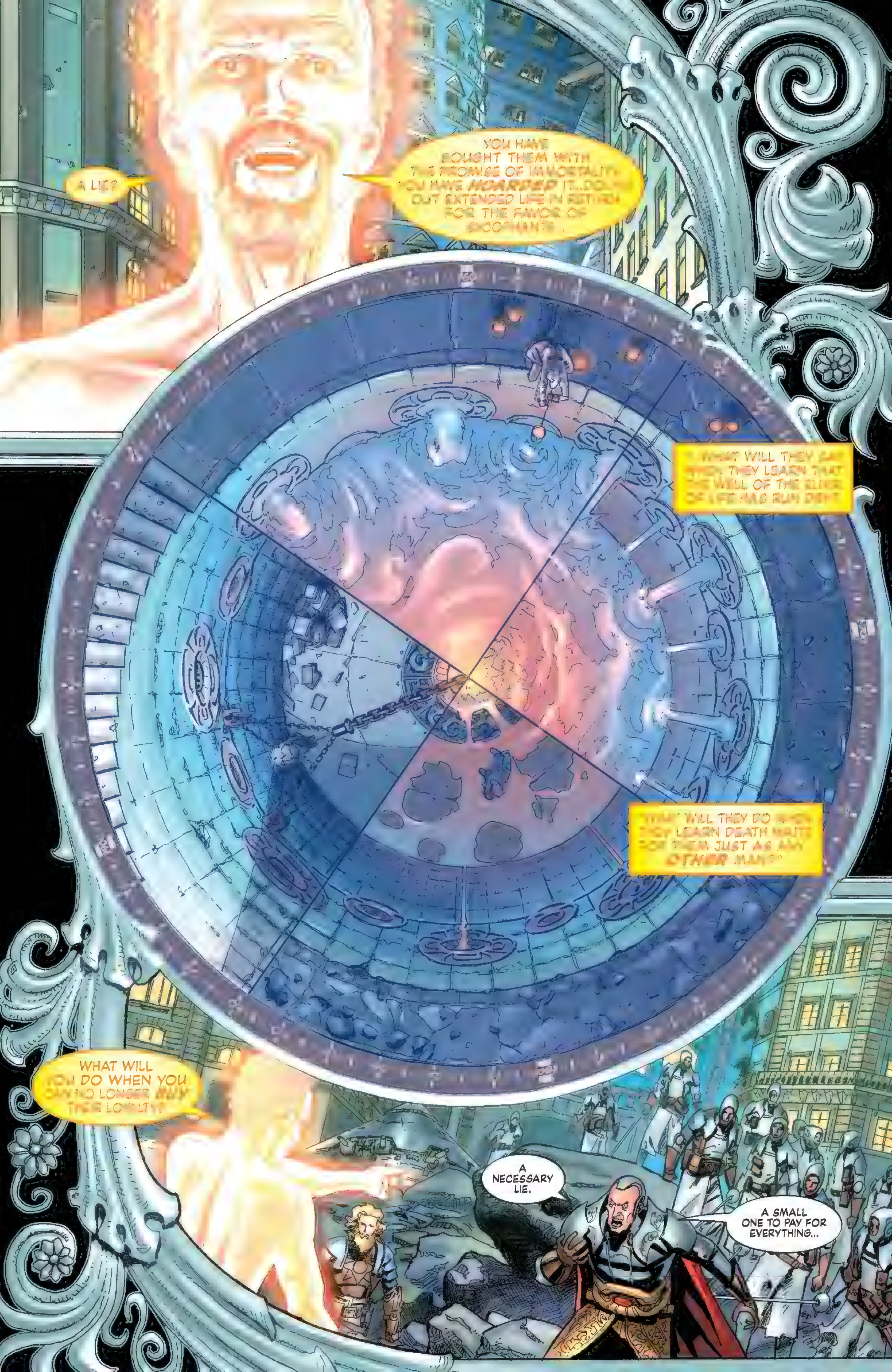

STARK...
...HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHO RULES HERE?


I HAVE NOT, MASTER NEWTON.
BUT I DID NOT MAKE THIS FOR WAR AND CERTAINLY NOT FOR MURDER.
WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE?


SCHISM!
REBELLION!
BROTHERS ABANDONING BROTHERS... ABANDONING WHAT WE HAVE BELIEVED IN.

IT WILL NOT STAND.
THOSE LOYAL WILL NOT PERMIT IT.


LOYAL?
LOYAL TO WHAT...?


A LIE?
YOU HAVE BOUGHT THEM WITH THE PROMISE OF IMMORTALITY. YOU HAVE HOARDED IT...DOLING OUT EXTENDED LIFE IN ESTHAN FOR THE FAVOR OF SYCOPHANTS.
WHAT WILL THEY DO WHEN THEY LEARN THAT THE WELL OF THE ELIXIR OF LIFE HAS RUN DRY?
WHAT WILL THEY DO WHEN THEY LEARN DEATH WAITS FOR THEM JUST AS AN OTHER MAN?
WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU CAN NO LONGER BUY THEIR LOYALTY?
A NECESSARY LIE.
A SMALL ONE TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING...

I STILL HAVE THE GREATER TRUTH--***THE WORLD ENDS! THE WORLD ENDS!***

IT'S INESCAPABLE AND MUST BE ***SERVED!***

NO. WE KNOW THE TRUTH NOW.

THESE MEN AND I HAVE SEEN THE FAR FUTURE... BREATHED ITS AIR, TOUCHED ITS EARTH.

WE HAVE ***LIVED*** WHAT YOU SAY IS IMPOSSIBLE.

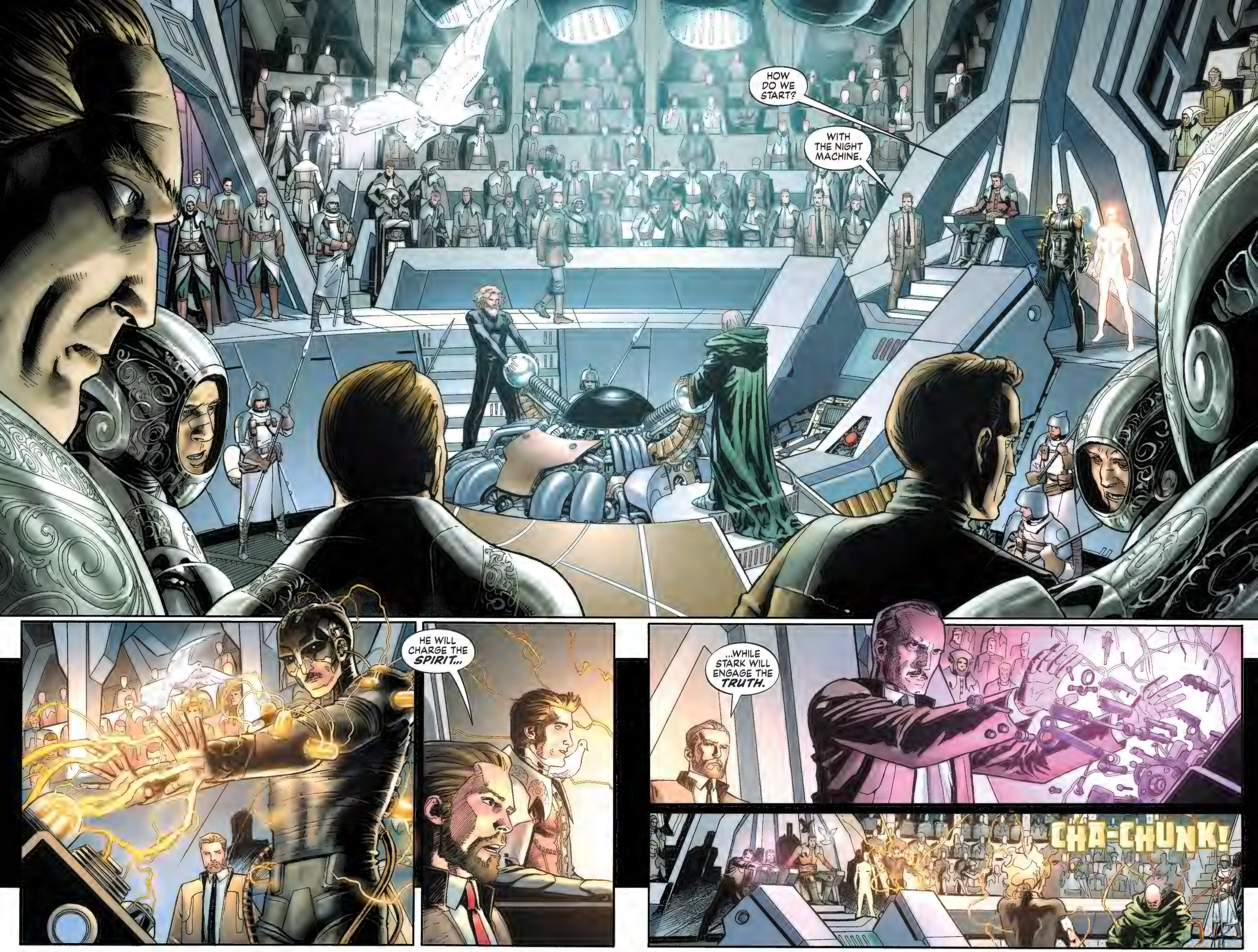
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO CLEAVE THE TRUTH FROM THE LIES. WE MUST CALL A ***COUNCIL.*** BUT WHO WILL SIT IN JUDGMENT?

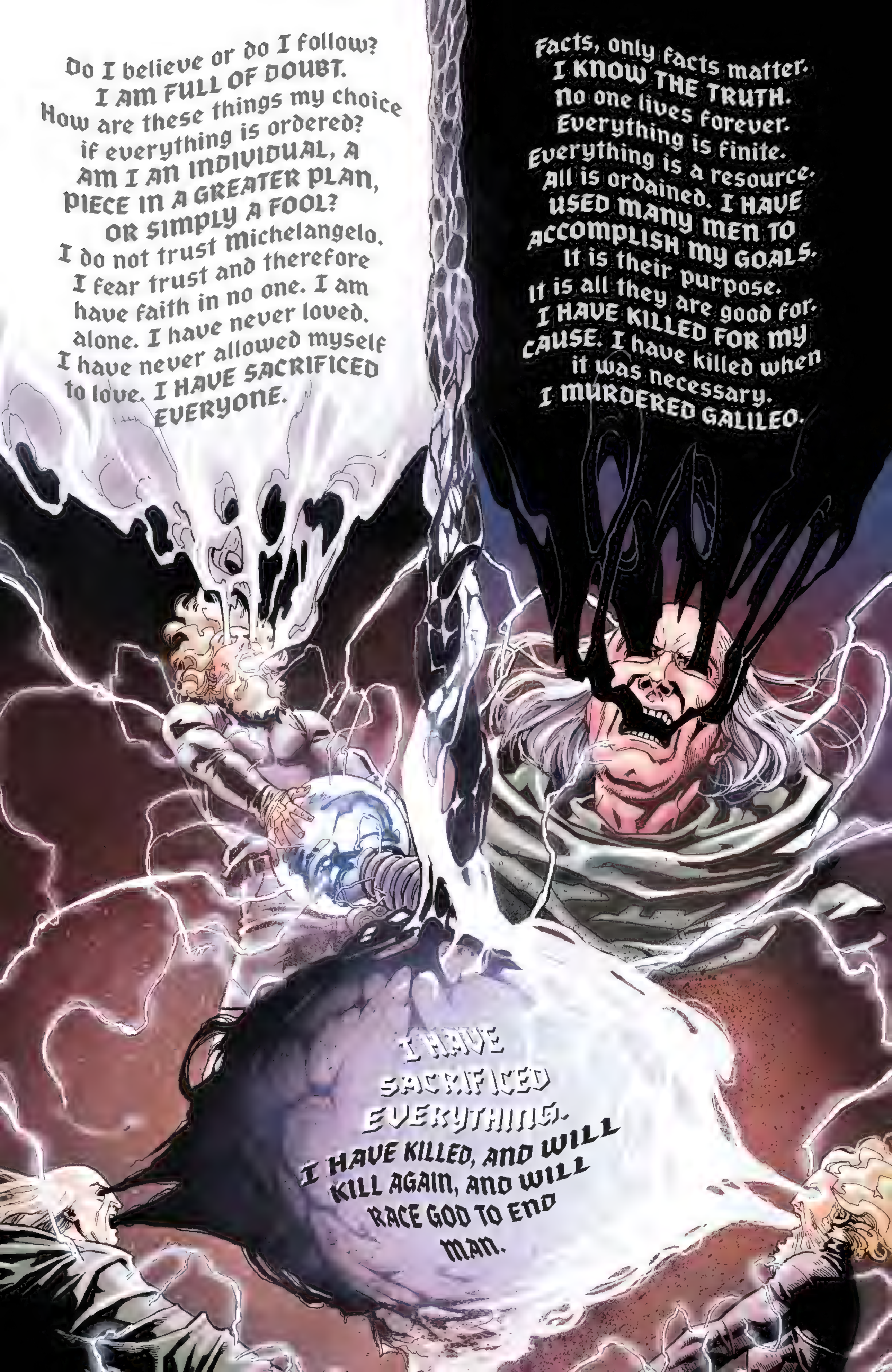
OH, I THINK IT'S QUITE SIMPLE, REALLY...

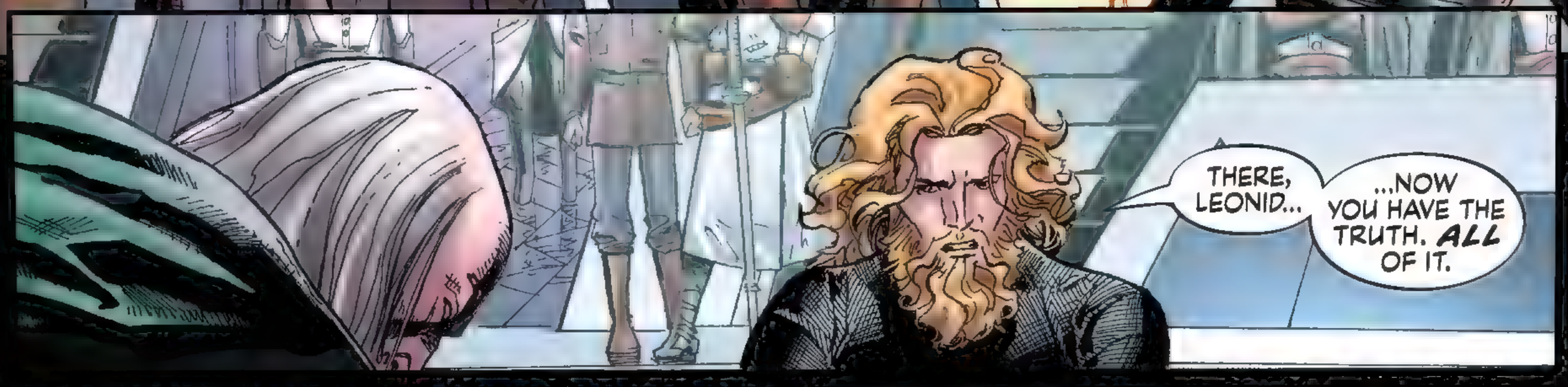
TWO IDEAS--REPRESENTED BY ***TWO MEN...***IDEAS THAT DIVIDE ***TWO FATHERS.***

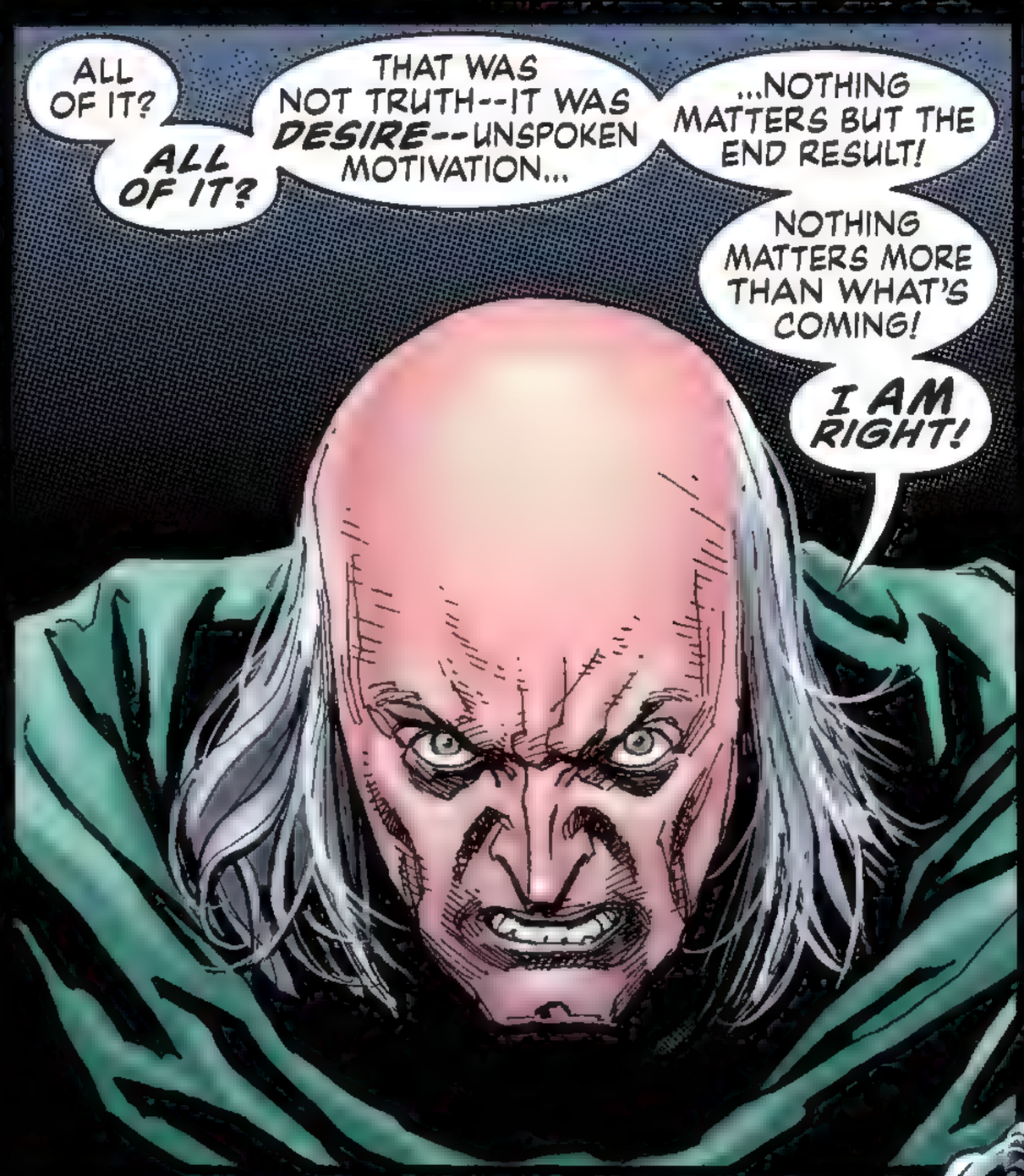
WHY NOT LET THE ***BOY*** DECIDE?

Later.
YOU HAVE IT?
IF NEEDED, I WILL BE READY.
BROTHER, I'M SORRY, BUT I MUST ASK--ARE YOU ARMED?
I HAVE MY MIND, DON'T I?
GET OUT OF MY WAY.
THE CONCLAVE-- JUDGMENT-- BEGINS NOW.


HOW DO WE START?
WITH THE NIGHT MACHINE.
HE WILL CHARGE THE SPIRIT...
...WHILE STARK WILL ENGAGE THE TRUTH.
CHA-CHUNK!


Do I believe or do I follow?
I AM FULL OF DOUBT.
How are these things my choice
if everything is ordered?
AM I AN INDIVIDUAL, A
PIECE IN A GREATER PLAN,
OR SIMPLY A FOOL?
I do not trust Michelangelo.
I fear trust and therefore
have faith in no one. I am
alone. I have never loved.
I have never allowed myself
to love. I HAVE SACRIFICED
EVERYONE.
Facts, only facts matter.
I KNOW THE TRUTH.
No one lives forever.
Everything is finite.
Everything is a resource.
All is ordained. I HAVE
USED MANY MEN TO
ACCOMPLISH MY GOALS.
It is their purpose.
It is all they are good for.
I HAVE KILLED FOR MY
CAUSE. I have killed when
it was necessary.
I MURDERED GALILEO.
I HAVE
SACRIFICED
EVERYTHING.
I HAVE KILLED, AND WILL
KILL AGAIN, AND WILL
RACE GOD TO END
MAN.


THERE, LEONID...
...NOW YOU HAVE THE TRUTH. ALL OF IT.

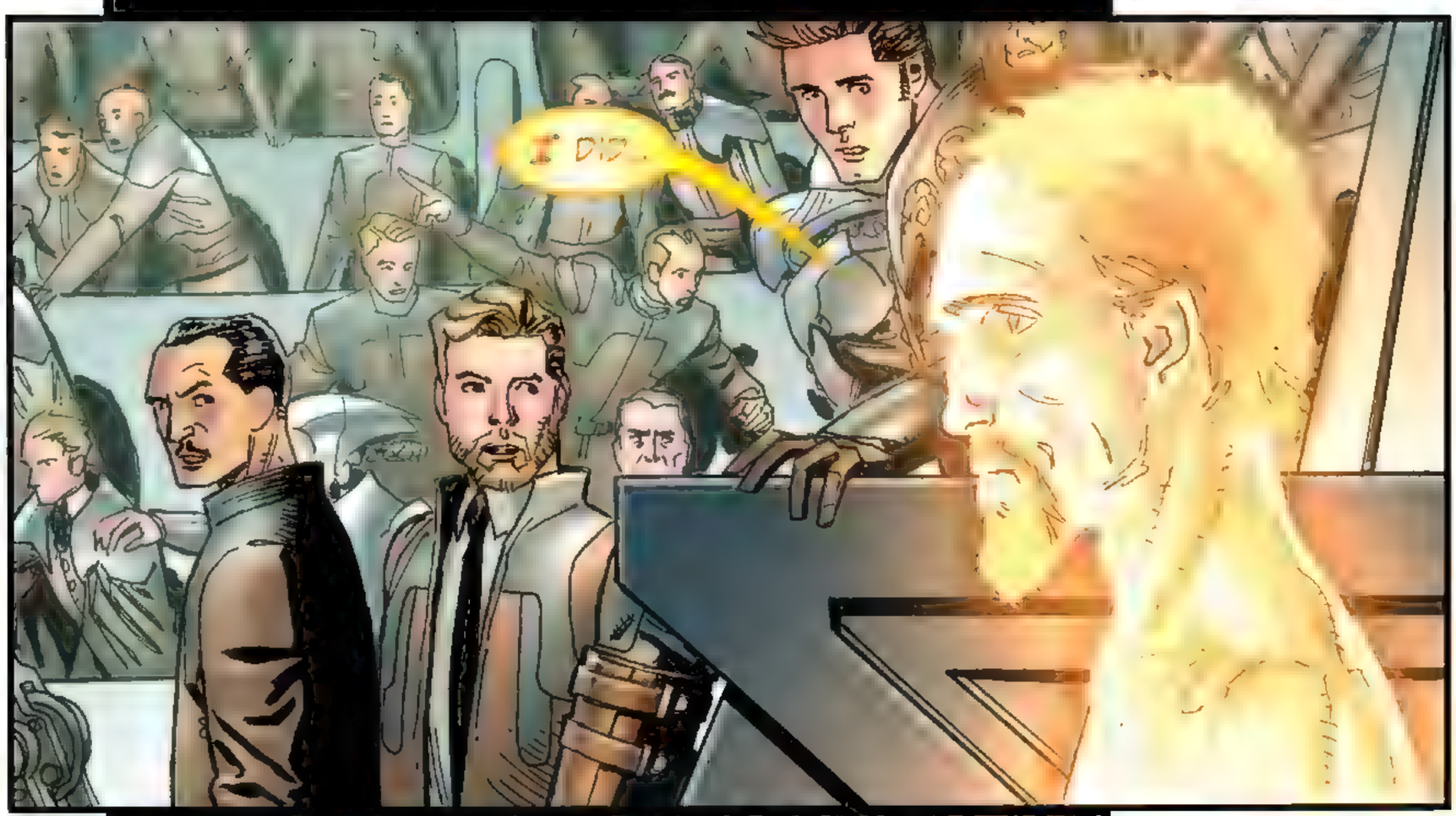

ALL OF IT?
ALL OF IT?
THAT WAS NOT TRUTH--IT WAS DESIRE--UNSPOKEN MOTIVATION...
...NOTHING MATTERS BUT THE END RESULT!
NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN WHAT'S COMING!
I AM RIGHT!

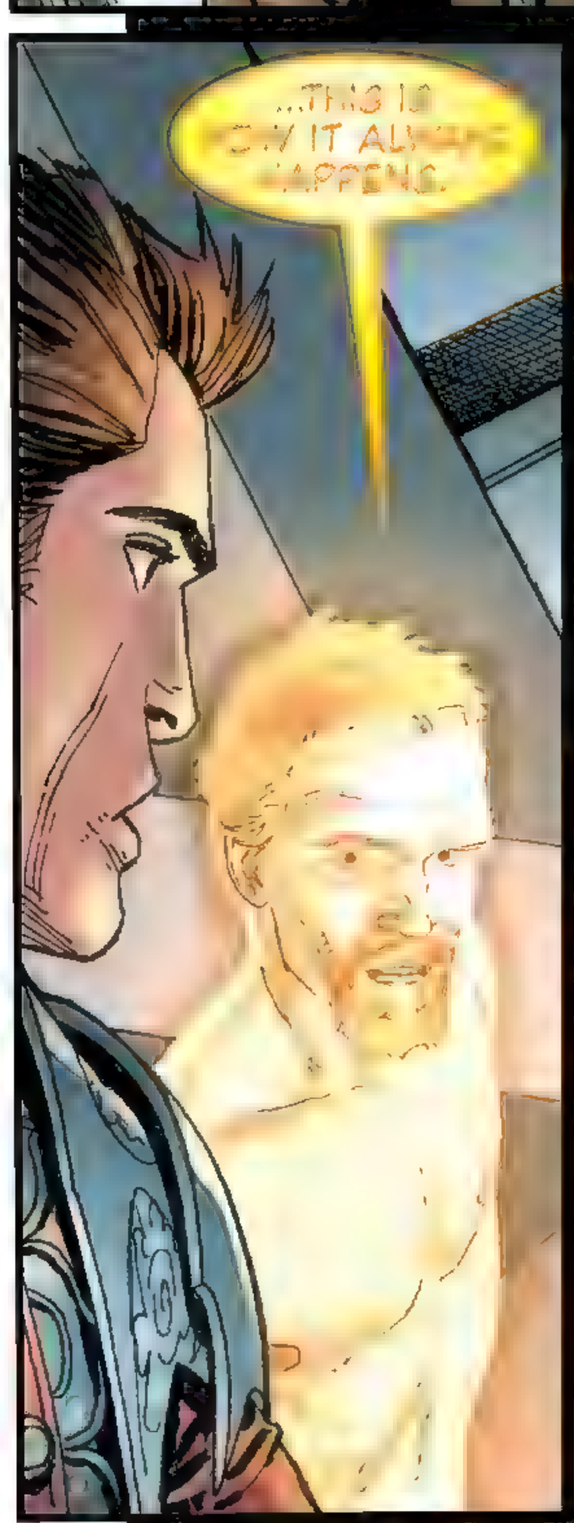
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT.
I WON'T BELIEVE THAT.
I DO NOT WANT TO CHOOSE.
BUT IF I MUST, I CHOOSE BROTHER DA VINCI.

THERE IT IS...HE HAS DECIDED.
AND NOW I SAY ISAAC NEWTON FORFEITS HIS LIFE.
SOMETHING TOO LONG IN COMING.

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PAYING ATTENTION...
YOU CAN'T KILL ME--I'VE BEEN DEAD ALL ALONG.
I KNOW HOW THE WORLD ENDS... WITH ME WATCHING IT BURN.
MASTER!
STOP HIM!
TUNK
FWISS SHHH!
ZWAM!

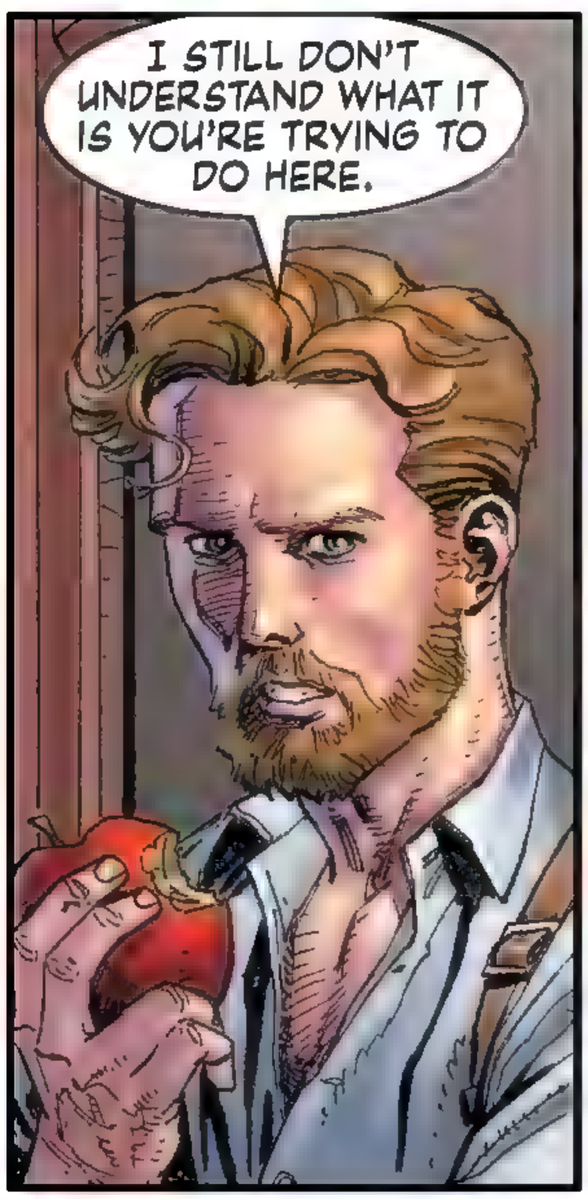
I DIDN'T SEE THAT COMING.

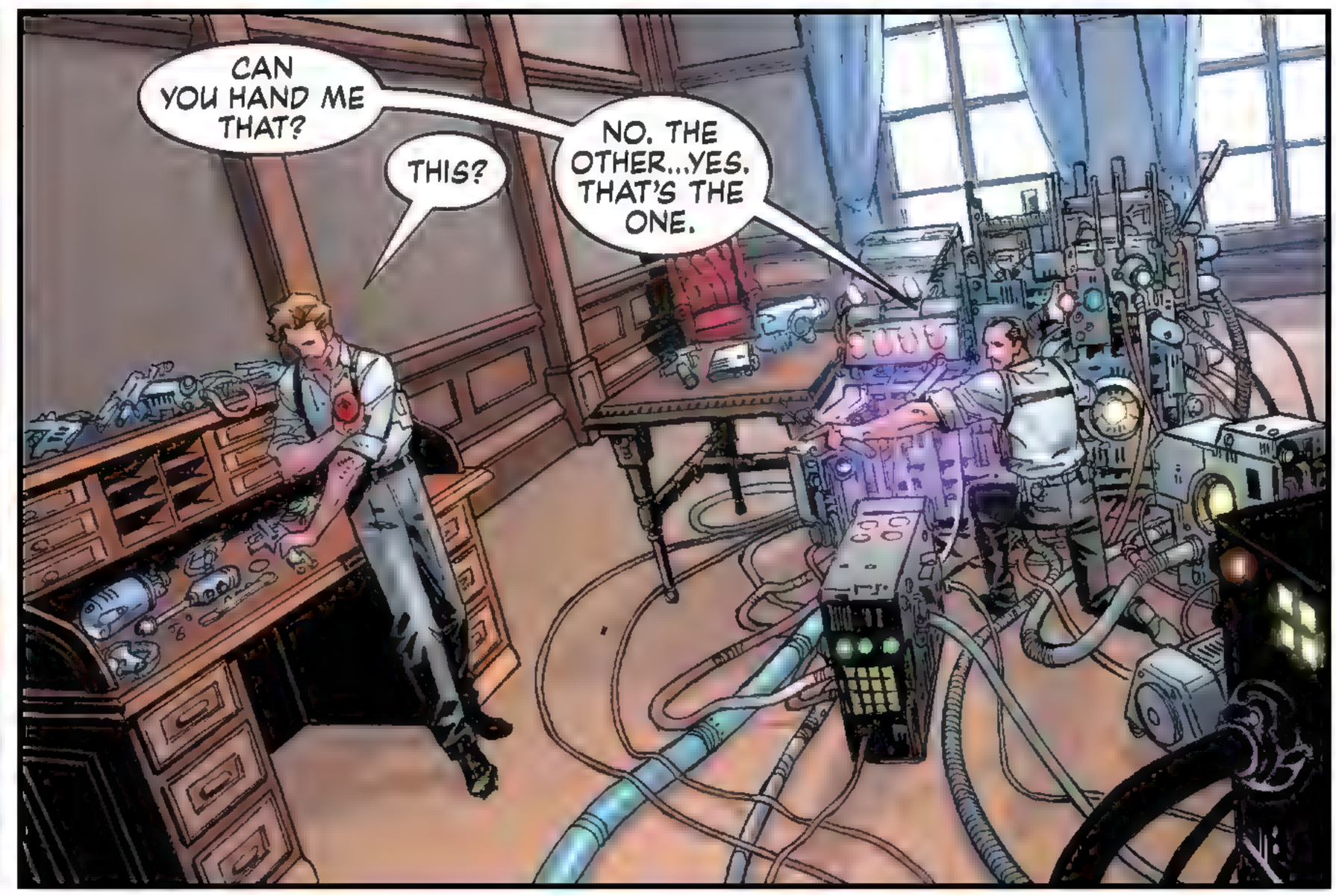

I DID...


...THIS IS HOW IT ALWAYS HAPPENS.

AND WE THINK HE WENT...?
YES. TO THE FUTURE.
SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

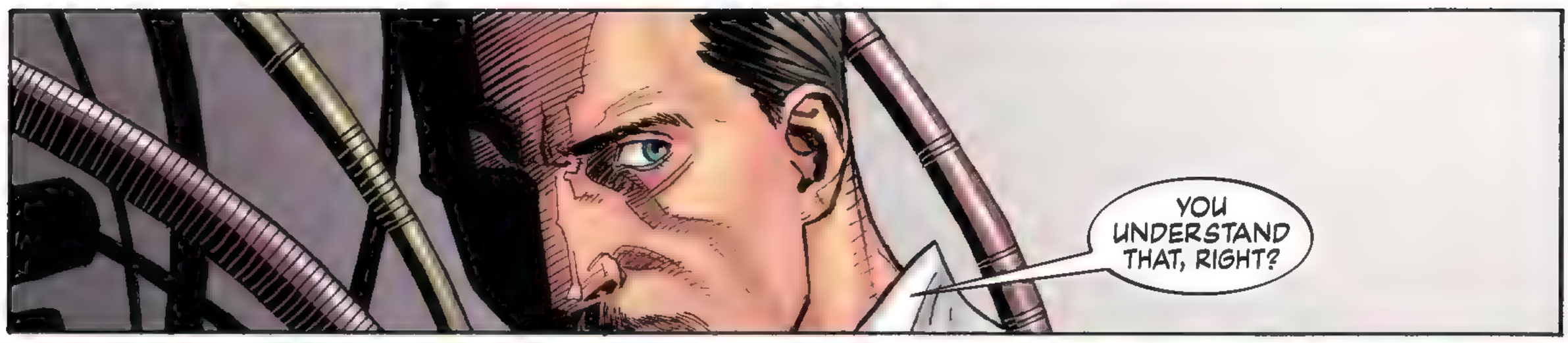
Later.

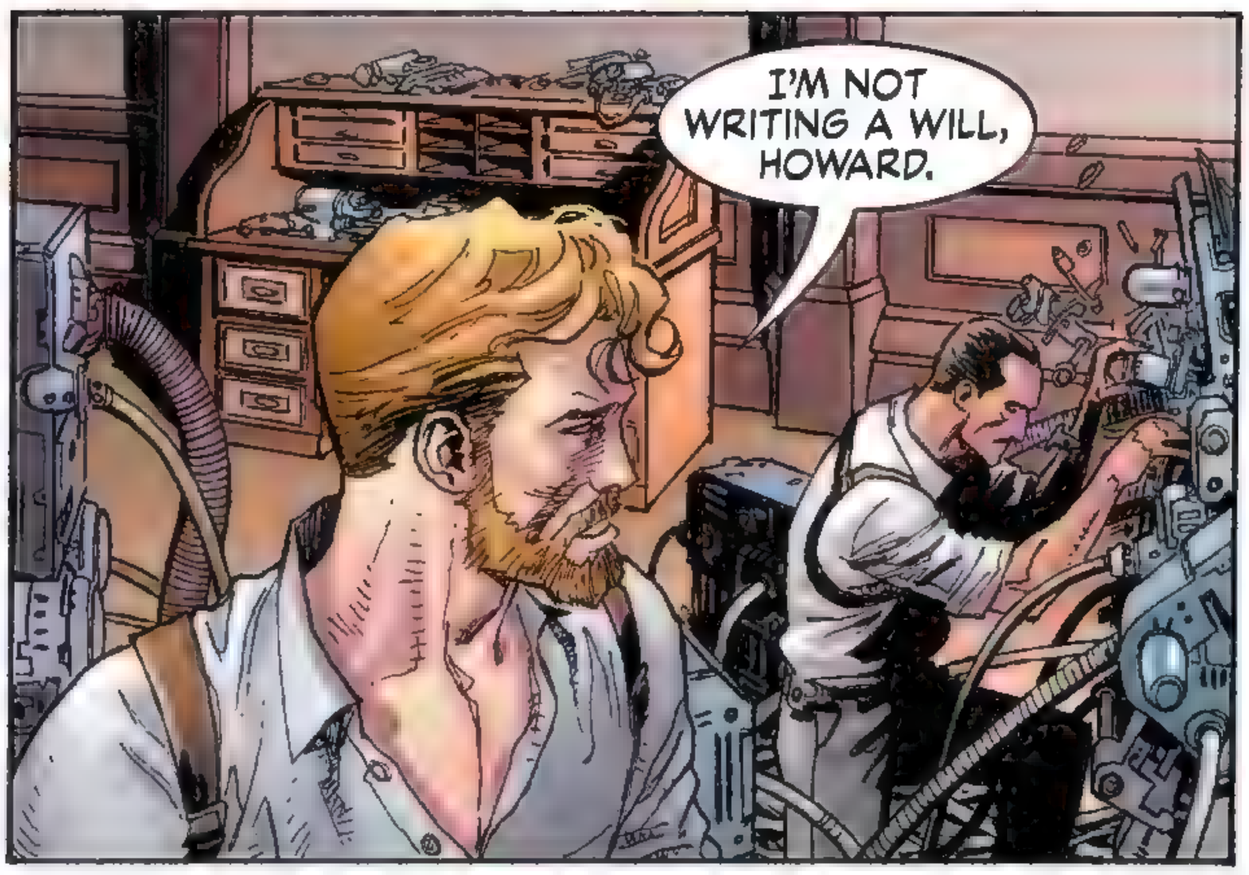

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS YOU'RE TRYING TO DO HERE.


CAN YOU HAND ME THAT?
THIS?
NO. THE OTHER...YES. THAT'S THE ONE.

SO, WHAT *IS* IT?
IT'S GOING TO BE A MESSAGE.

WE...
...*I* NEED TO LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND.


YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, RIGHT?


I'M NOT WRITING A WILL, HOWARD.

I PLAN ON COMING BACK.

MY NAME IS HOWARD STARK...
...AND THIS IS A RECORD OF WHY WE WAR.

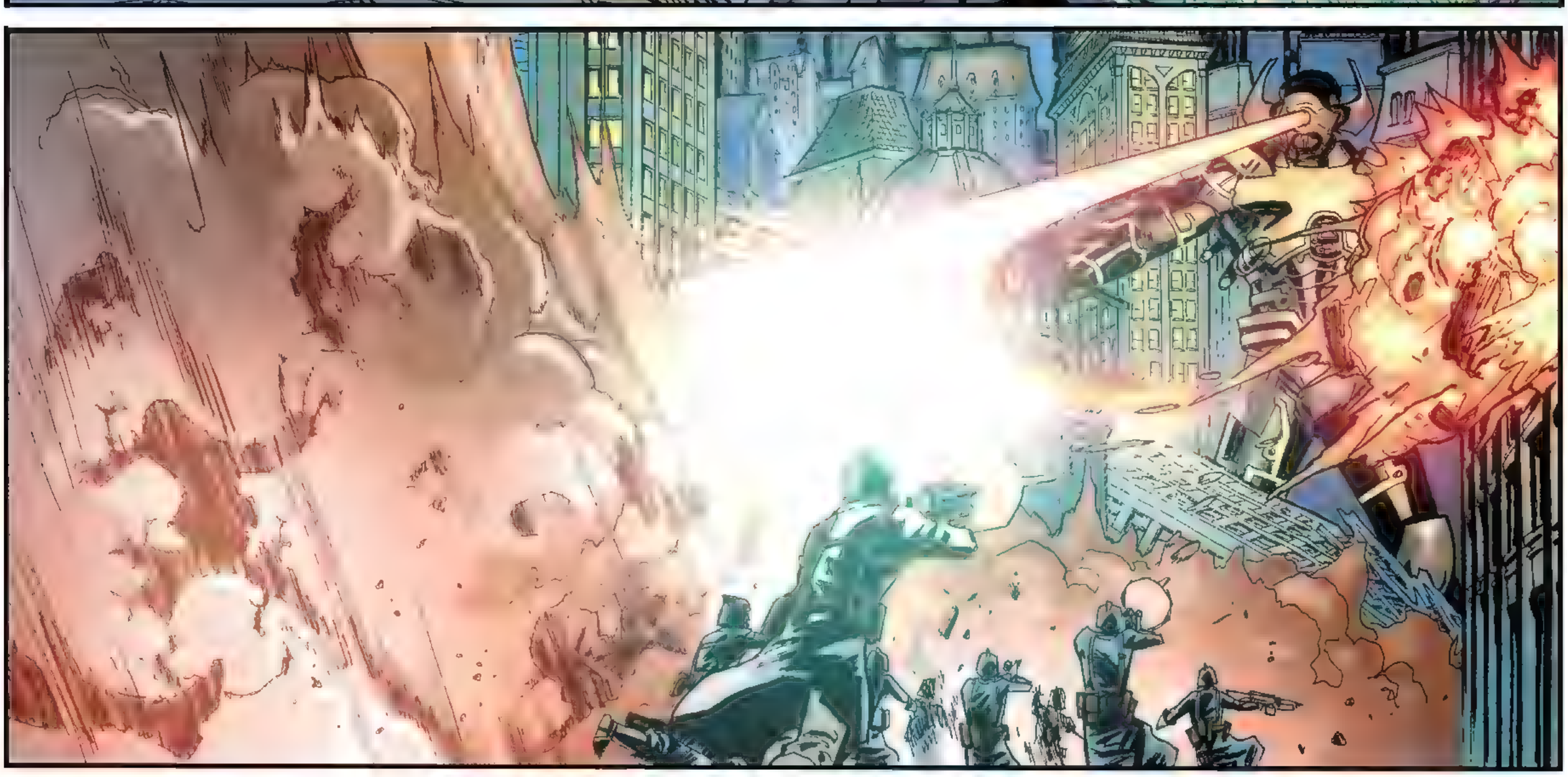
LOOK HIGH--LOOK LOW...
I'M SURE HE MUST HAVE HIDDEN IT SOMEWHERE.
RICH MEN ARE CARELESS--THE WEALTHY, WASTEFUL.
X=2
LIFE!
LIFE!
WITH MORE ELIXIR WE COULD LIVE FOREVER AND--
1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0
EH?

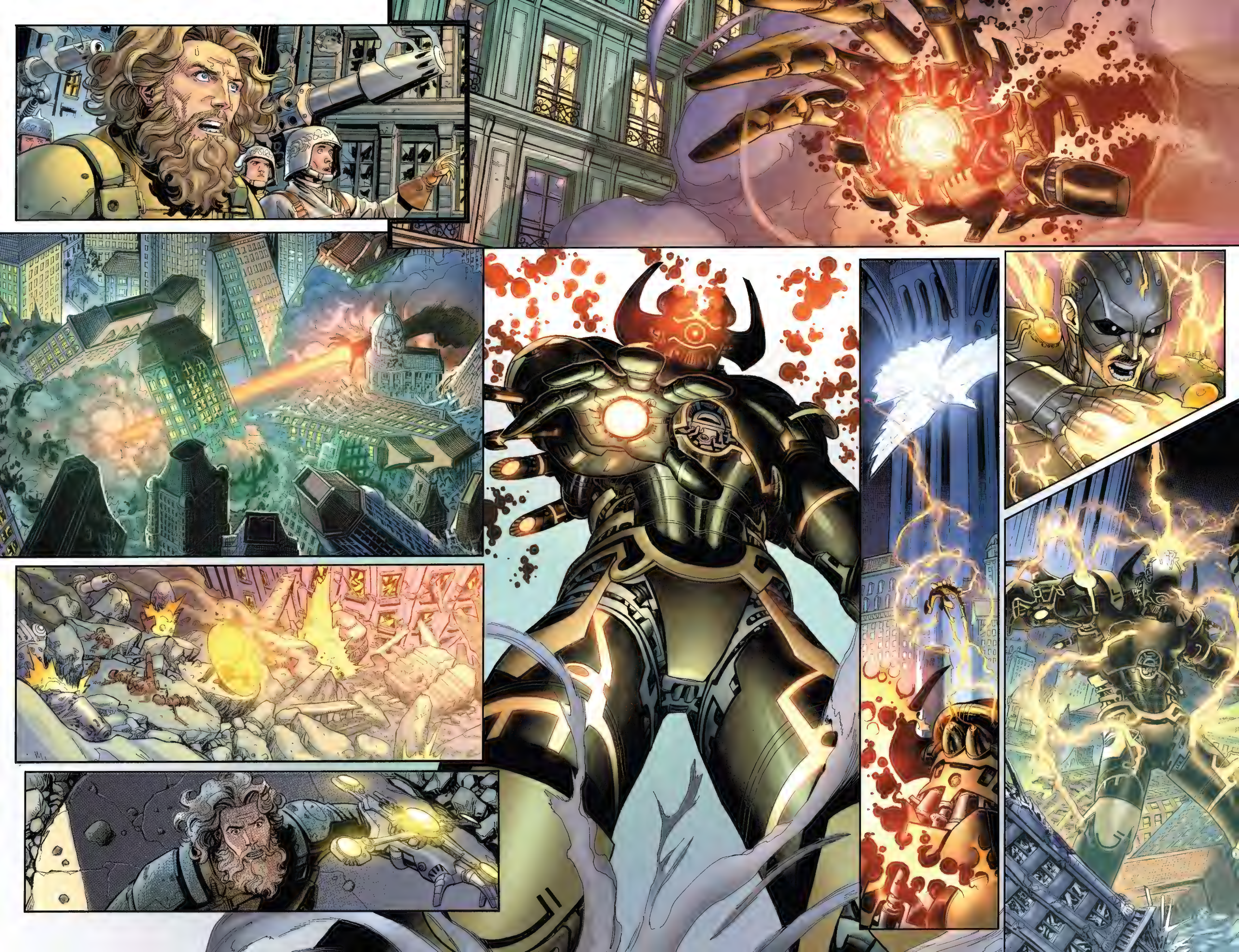
Born in the heart of our sun, the Star Child's language was arithmetica--
--exponential Celestial growth first meant the mastery of basic mathematics, and in the years that came after, algebra, calculus and the things that followed those--
--Complex Analysis, Abstract Algebra, Real Analysis, Topology--and on...
...until he came to this: a wild arithmetic strain... something new.
The Quiet Math.
The greatest human scientist to ever live had attempted to Solve for Everything and succeeded!
And that knowledge drove the Star Child *mad*.

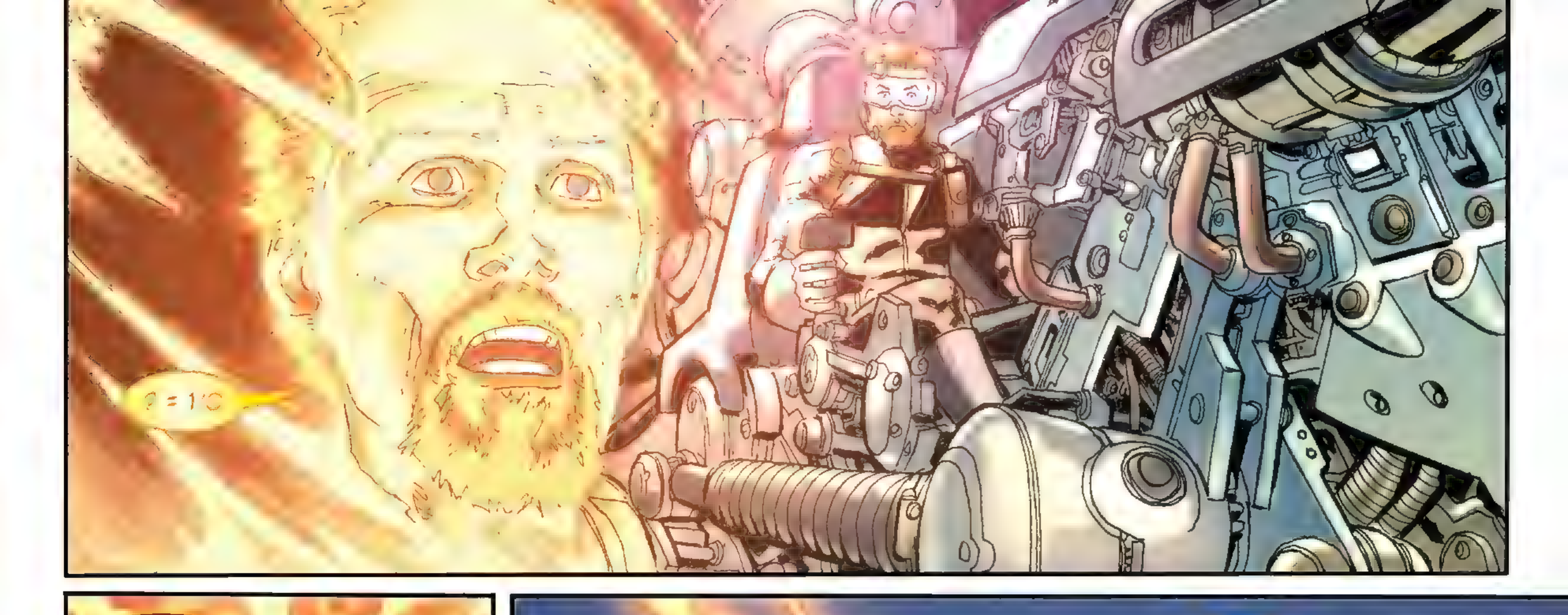
See, Newton was right all along.
Everything ends.

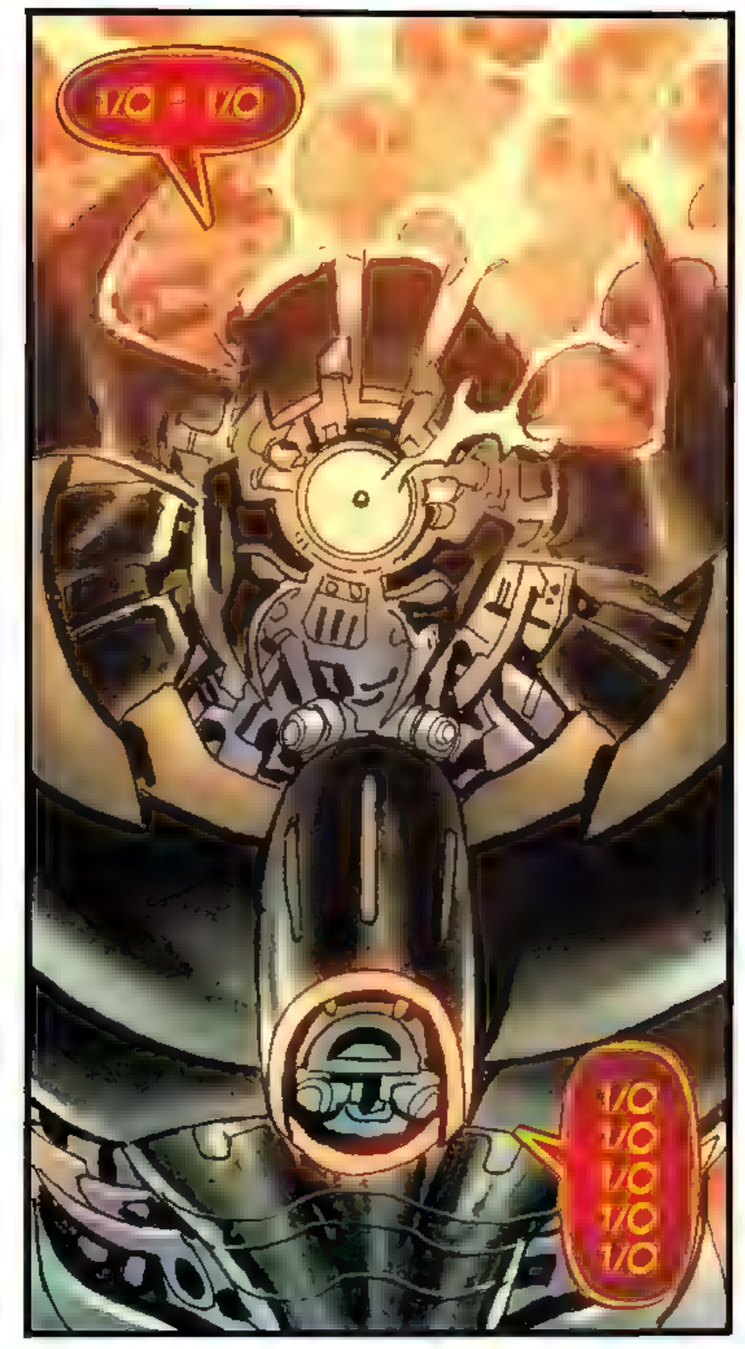
Chapter Three:
"The Fall"

The Immortal City.

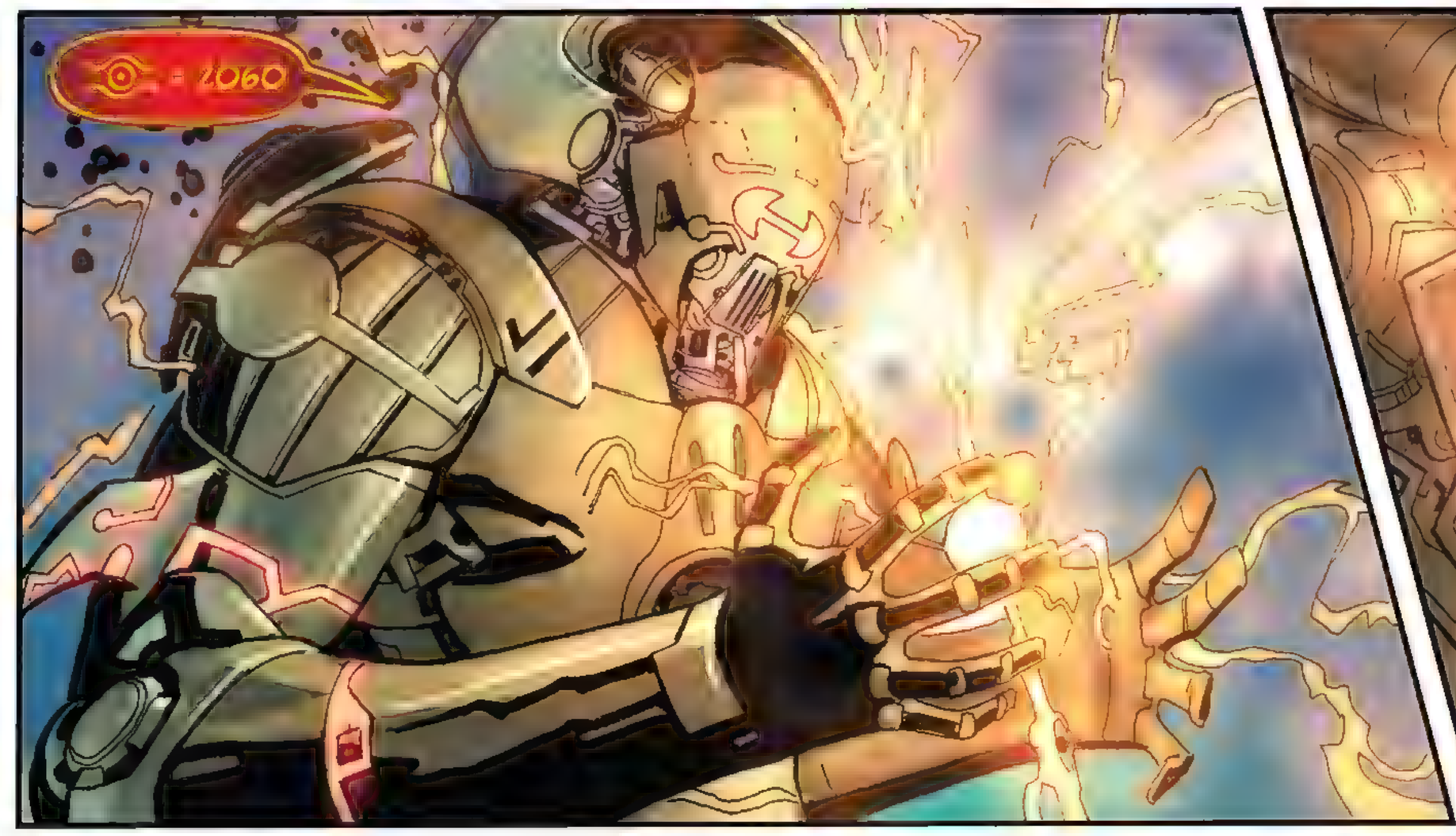




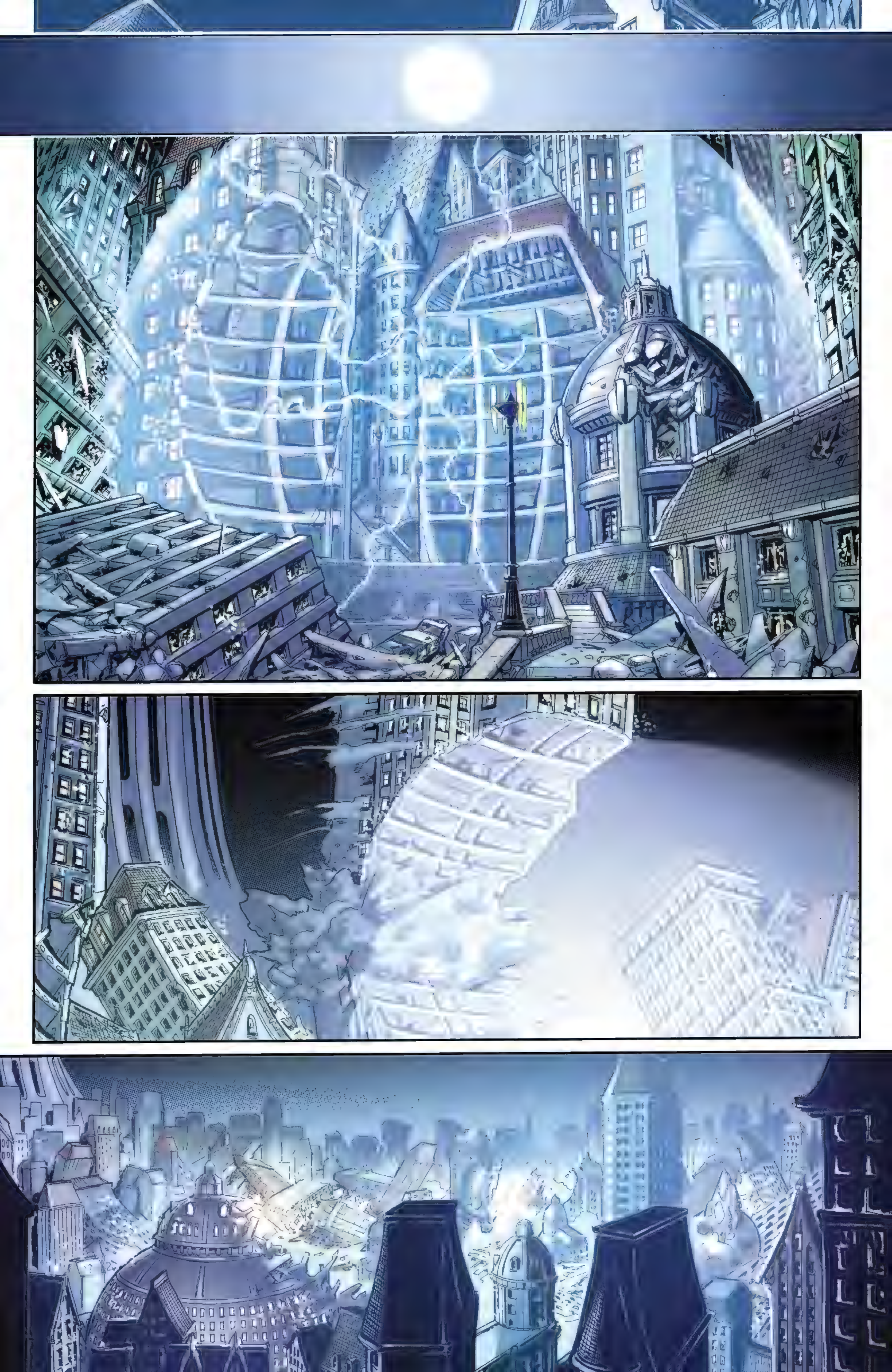

? = 1/0


1/0 = 1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0

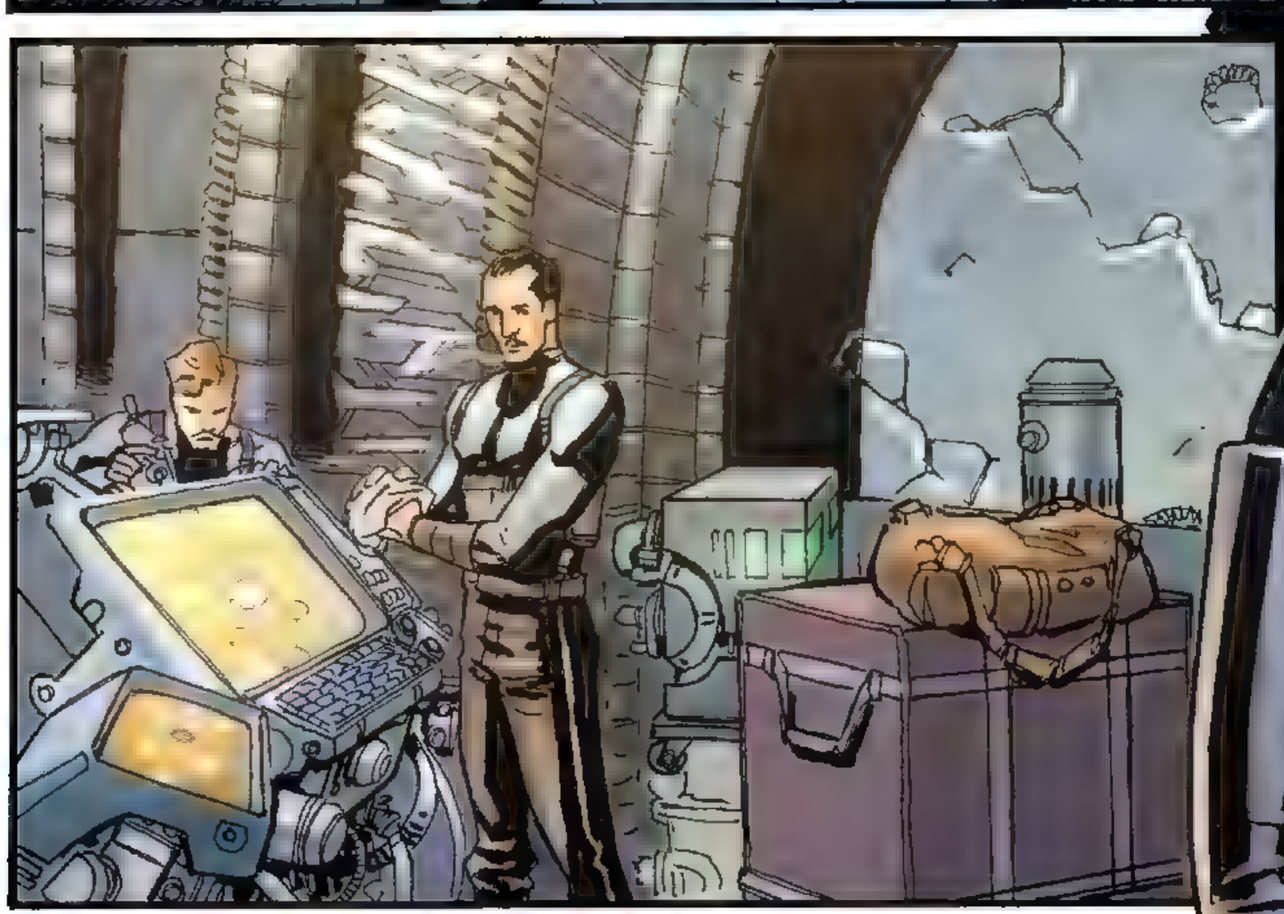
X = X
X = ?

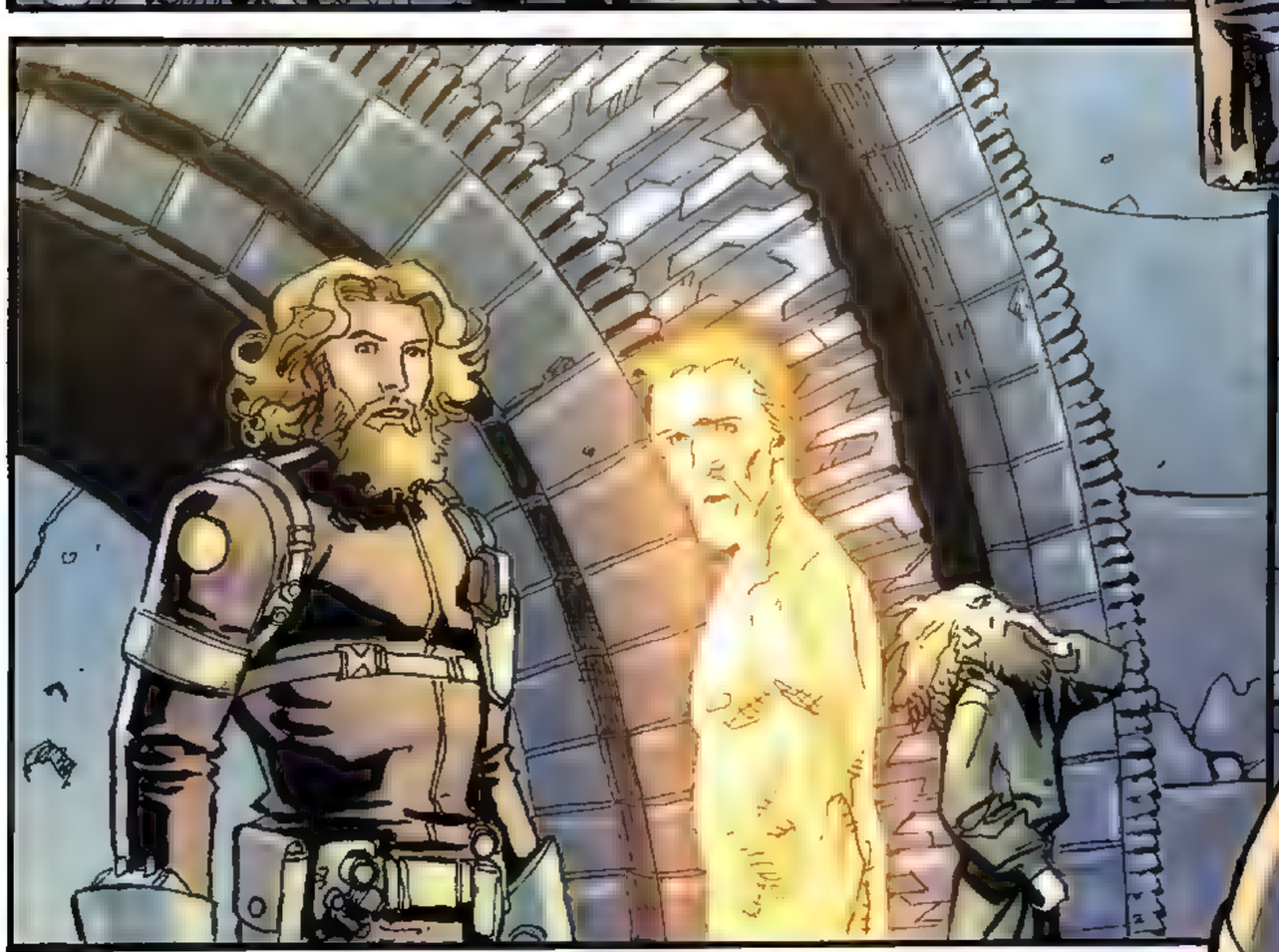

= 2060

2060
2060
2060
2060



Later.





I ASSUME THIS MEANS THERE'S A PLAN.

OF COURSE.
THE STAR CHILD SHADOWS NEWTON, SO WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THEM...
...TO THE FUTURE.

Chapter Four:

"All Together Now"

The Zargos Mountains.

IF WE'RE GOING TO GO FORWARD--IF THERE REALLY *IS* A FUTURE WORTH FIGHTING FOR--WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO IT TOGETHER.

THIS WAY.

IT IS NOT CRYOGENICS OR LOW-YIELD STASIS. THIS REQUIRES A SUBTLE TOUCH, STARK.

MAKE SURE--

YES, I'VE GOT IT, NIKOLA.

NATHANIEL, ALL WE'RE GOING TO NEED IS A FIRM CONNECTION.

AND A BIT OF A SPARK.

IT'S WORKING.
It was the way things had always been. The Shield in the West, the Spear in the East...
The greater brotherhood, always divided.
Apart, both of these became corrupted. The West turned inward and for centuries devoured itself. The East flew apart, and as time passed, dissipated with each successive generation.
Except for the Last Caliphate, the three brothers of Causality.
They were hidden away at the height of the East for a tomorrow when they would be needed most.
Hidden away at the request of the Forever Man.

The Immortal City.

WELCOME BACK, BROTHERS.

THIS APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME A DARK AND DIRTY WORLD. I AM GOING TO GREET YOU NOW, FOREVER MAN.

HELLO, MICHELANGELO.

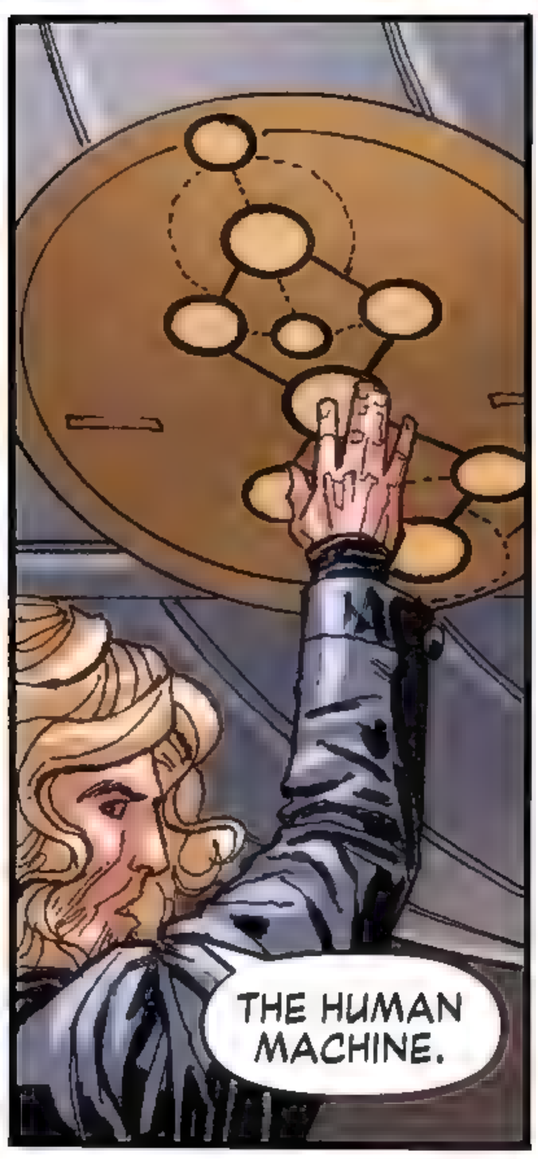
AFTER WE REUNITE, WE WILL TRAVEL TO THE END OF HUMAN HISTORY-- TO SAVE THE WORLD OR WATCH IT BURN I CANNOT SAY.

IT LIES BEYOND MY SIGHT.

THEY ARE THE EMBODIMENT OF BRANCHING TIME, LEONID. WHAT IS, WHAT HAS COME BEFORE, AND WHAT WILL BE.

HUH.

WE ARE ALL HERE. IT'S TIME.



The Engine.
The Navigator.
The Source.
The Mechanism.
The Conduit.
The Path.

The Anchor.
WHEN YOU ARE READY, LEONID.
The Sacrifice. The man left behind.
The BUILDER.
SUCCESS... GLORY...AND HOPEFULLY BOTH.
FAREWELL, MY FRIENDS.

2060. The Rebirth of Man.

BA-BA-DUURRRMMP!

MY GOD...

THIS... THIS...CAN'T BE.

THE REBIRTH. THE BEGINNING OF ALL THAT CAN BE. THE BROKEN LOOP. THE ETERNAL PROMISE.

THIS IS HOW THE WORLD BEGINS.

PARADISE... BUT ALL KNOWLEDGE LOST. HOW?

THERE!

I'LL GO. STAY HERE.

IT APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY STRUCTURE NEARBY. THERE ARE HEAT SIGNATURES IN THE FOREST, BUT THEY ARE KEEPING THEIR DISTANCE.
THE MACHINE LED US HERE. SO THIS IS WHERE WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
EVERYTHING LOOKS...
...PEACEFUL.
ZZZZAKKKK!
FATHER!
NATHANIEL... ARM THE BROTHERS, PLEASE.

AH...OLD FRIENDS.
WELCOME.
WHO?
NEWTON. BETRAYER. PROPHET.
THE MAN WHO REMADE THE WORLD.
IS THIS IT...?
IS THIS THE FUTURE YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

2060. The Height of Modernity.

BA-BA-DUURRRMMP!

MY GOD...

THIS... THIS...EVERYTHING I BELIEVED IT WOULD BE.

THE NEXT STEP. THE ARC OF ASCENDANCY. THE FEEDBACK LOOP. TOMORROW'S TOMORROW.

THIS IS HOW THE WORLD COULD BE.

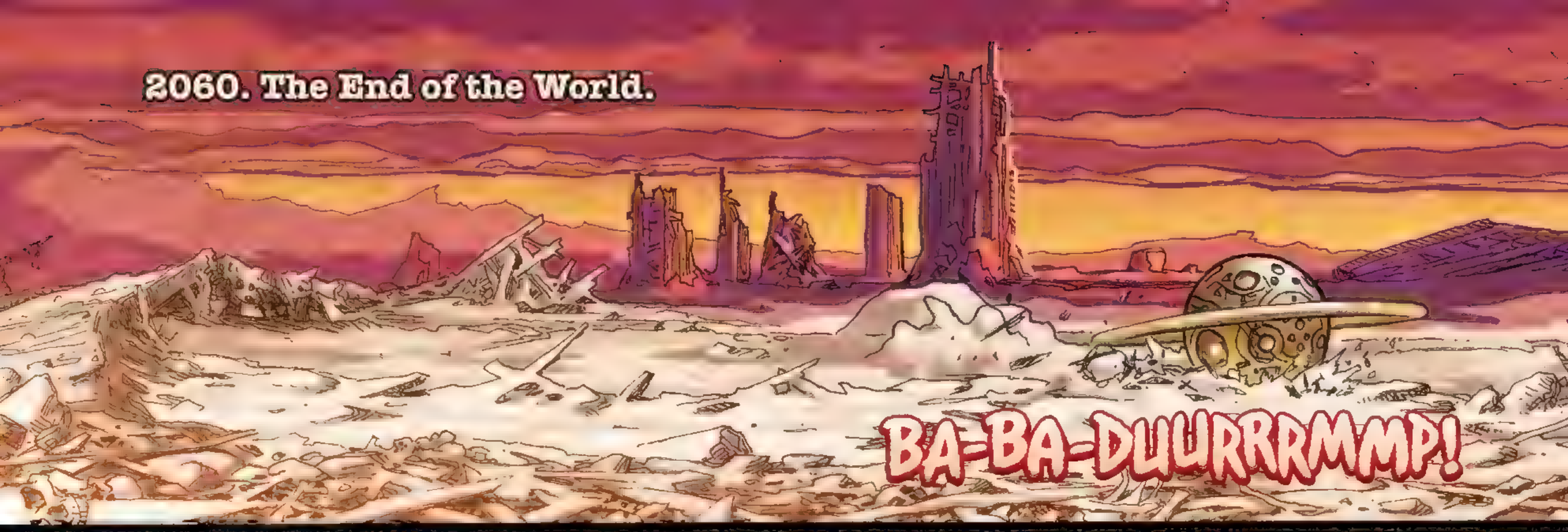
A PARADISE... CENTURIES LOST, BUT MILLENNIA GAINED.

THERE!

I'LL GO. STAY HERE.

IT APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY STRUCTURE OF ITS KIND. IT IS THE ONLY DESIGN OF THIS TYPE IN SIGHT...
YES. THE MACHINE BROUGHT US HERE. THIS MUST BE WHERE WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
IT LOOKS...SO SMALL.
OH, COME ON...
...FOR FUTURE-LAND ARCHITECTURE, WHATEVER THAT IS, IT'S DOWN-RIGHT SAD.
ZZZZAKKKK!
FATHER!
NATHANIEL... ARM THE BROTHERS, PLEASE.

AH...OLD FRIENDS.
WELCOME.
WHO?
NEWTON. BETRAYER. ANACHRONIST.
THE MAN WHO COULD NOT DEFEAT THE FUTURE.
IS THIS IT...?
IS THIS THE FUTURE YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?


2060. The End of the World.
BA-BA-DLURRRMMP!

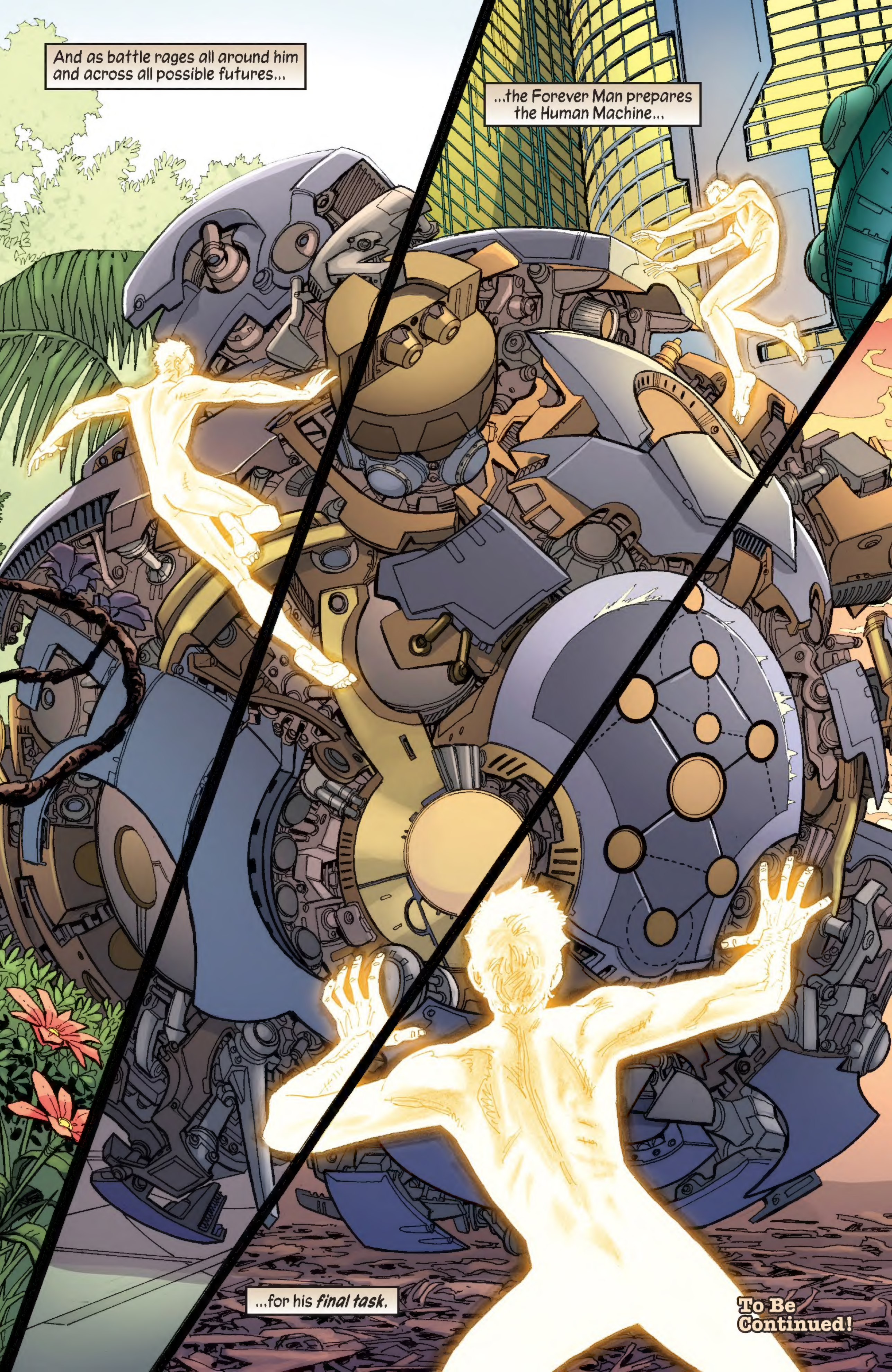
MY GOD...
THIS... THIS...CAN'T BE.
THE END. THE END OF ALL THAT WAS. THE CLOSED LOOP. THE ETERNAL PROMISE.
THIS IS HOW THE WORLD ENDS.

A WASTELAND... CENTURIES LOST, FOR WHAT?
THERE!
I'LL GO. STAY HERE.

IT APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY STRUCTURE NEARBY. THERE ARE SOME BUILDINGS 50 MILES IN THE DISTANCE...
NO. THE MACHINE LED US HERE. THIS IS WHERE WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
IT LOOKS... QUESTIONABLE.
OH, COME ON...
...FOR AN END-TIMES APOCALYPSE, IT APPEARS DOWNRIGHT COZY.
ZZZZAKKKK!
FATHER!
NATHANIEL... ARM THE BROTHERS, PLEASE.

AH...OLD FRIENDS.
WELCOME.
WHO?
NEWTON. BETRAYER. APOSTATE.
THE MAN WHO IS GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD.
IS THIS IT...?
IS THIS THE FUTURE YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

DO NOT FEAR FOREVER...
...IT'S RIGHT HERE-- NOW--WITHIN YOUR GRASP!


And as battle rages all around him and across all possible futures...
...the Forever Man prepares the Human Machine...
...for his *final task.*
To Be Continued!

MARVEL

ZONE